














BEHIND THE SCENES IN THE  
REICHSTAG



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THE ABBÉ E. WETTERLÉ.

*Frontispiece.*]



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# BEHIND THE SCENES IN THE REICHSTAG

SIXTEEN YEARS OF  
PARLIAMENTARY LIFE IN GERMANY

BY THE

ABBÉ E. WETTERLÉ

EX-DEPUTY AT THE REICHSTAG AND IN THE  
ALSACE-LORRAINE CHAMBER

WITH A PREFATORY LETTER BY

RENÉ DOUMIC

MEMBER OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY

*Translated from the French by*

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OFFICIER DE L'INSTRUCTION PUBLIQUE

153007  
27/10/19

HODDER AND STOUGHTON  
LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO

MCMXVIII





## A PREFATORY LETTER

DEAR ABBÉ WETTERLÉ,—

It is a pleasure to me to have the opportunity of saying what all of us in France think of you, why we love and admire you, and what a place all that your name personifies occupies in our hearts.

Do you recollect one of the first lectures which, at the beginning of the war, you delivered in Paris? The Société des Conférences had invited you to speak on the subject of the dear provinces towards which all our hopes are directed. When, well before the hour, I went to our hall on the Boulevard Saint-Germain, I found the approaches obstructed by a compact crowd, which desired at all hazards to enter the overcrowded building. It became necessary to promise this disappointed but obstinate audience that you would deliver your lecture a second time. . You might have reappeared thrice, nay ten times before our honest and responsive Parisian public. It would not have grown tired of coming to hear you, and I say not only to applaud you, but to drink in your words. Those were magnificent gatherings, penetrated by a sacred thrill.

What you represent in our eyes is the fidelity of Alsace-Lorraine. To whatever trials that stubborn fidelity has been submitted, it has never flinched. Even when France seemed to be absorbed in sad interior quarrels and to follow up with less impatience the imprescriptible claim, you preserved your faith intact. Not for a moment was your thought turned from us. And that thought has been your whole thought—the thought which has inspired your whole life—your unique thought.

And what you also represent is the determination to

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become French once more, you who in your conscience have never ceased to be French, among the best French of France. For you did not confine yourself to platonic protests, you did not content yourself with the vagueness of touching regrets and hopes. Vain home-sickness is not the thing for you. To will, is really to employ all the means which lead to a given end ; and under the most oppressive yoke, face to face with the most inventive tyranny, you have never let slip an opportunity, you have never neglected a means of hastening the liberating end.

Fidelity and determination make up the whole of you. One has only to look at you. Thick-set, strong in the back, square-shouldered and round-headed, you are strength itself. You were cut out for strife, and in the midst of strife you are in your element. You have striven for the common cause. You have suffered. You have braved persecution and undergone imprisonment. Your prestige is the result of that, and thence, too, comes your authority. To speak and to write is in your case to act. It is much the fashion nowadays to extol action, in words. And from the way in which some people celebrate it, I cannot help thinking of those comic opera singers who interminably repeat "Let us be off ! Let us be off !" whilst stamping about on the stage. What they call action is mere talk about action. You, on the other hand, are not a maker of phrases ; deeds alone are to your fancy. Beneath each word you utter there is a reality ; every one carries, every one is a shot.

You write in the same manner. You have written thousands of articles. There is not one of them which was written with the mere object of producing an article to occupy or amuse the gallery. No. Every one—precise and direct—was aimed at an immediate object. That was



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a part of your action. Since the beginning of the war you have published several books, but there is not one of them which was not evolved from an idea bearing within it an active virtue.

Thus it is in the case of the present volume.

The idea which has guided you, around which your recollections—illustrated by your narrative—have crystallised, is as follows.

As a member of the Reichstag, you have seen German politicians close at hand. You know what you are to believe about them. You have been present at their debates and have seen them, as in all Parliaments, divide themselves into parties. As Conservatives, Socialists, or members of the Catholic Centre, you have observed them following different conceptions. Only, what you have also seen—seen with your own eyes—is that there was always, in any and every case, a point at which all divisions ceased as though by magic, a ground on which all could meet, an object to which all strained in common. The feeling with which all were in accord was their hatred of France. The object towards which all strained was the destruction of France. The thought in which all collaborated was the preparation for war against France.

During forty-four years they combined, arranged, strengthened, perfected the formidable machine which was to be directed against us. And we, during that time, continually and stubbornly closed our eyes and stopped our ears, unwilling to see or understand anything. We worked uninterruptedly—in that case only, alas! uninterruptedly—to weaken ourselves. We complacently welcomed, forbearingly diffused everything which disarms a nation and betrays it to the enemy. . . . Such is the painful parallel which the mind evokes when one reads your well-

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informed pages. . . . War broke out at the hour the Germans had chosen. So it was necessary, in the magnificent reawakening of the race, that French heroism should rebuild, but at the price of what a sacrifice ! all that our improvident leaders had criminally undone.

Thus your book teaches a lesson—a lesson for the present and the future. For you have not written these recollections merely with the object of reviving a dolorous past, nor in order to recriminate against our faults of yesterday. You would bar, in advance, the road to fresh errors, guard against fresh weakness. What Germany was before the war she is during and will remain after the war. Nothing will turn her from her object, which is to destroy us. She is aiming at it to-day on the battlefield ; to-morrow it will be in the economic arena. By violence or perfidy, one after the other or both together brutal and cunning, she strains towards the same end, which is her end in war and in peace. It is for us to know this, and not to allow ourselves to be duped a second time. Voices that one could have hoped to have been better inspired have already hazarded the advice that the German people be allowed their free development. The free development of the people of Germany . . . you know—you who have been “ Behind the Scenes in the Reichstag ”—what that means : the enslavement of the French nation.

So thanks, dear Abbé Wetterlé, for the assistance you bring us, at the tragic hour at which your book appears, and when all our energy ought to be directed to the work of national defence. May your words be the warning heard by all, the cry of alarm which makes known the danger, the *sursum corda* which exalts our courage and prepares it for supreme heroism.

RENÉ DOUMIC.



## FOREWORD

“CANNOT you give us some recollections of your parliamentary life ? ”

How many times I have been asked this question by editors of papers and reviews !

I have always hesitated to respond to these pressing requests, first because these excursions into the past, before the outbreak of war, can have but slight interest, and secondly because, being deprived of my notes, forgotten at Colmar or deposited in a safe place in a neutral country, I am obliged to rely wholly on my memory, which often fails me.

All that happened before the war is already so far away from us. In recalling these reminiscences of a still near past, it seems as though one were turning over the pages of an old conjuring-book. And yet the whole tragedy of to-day was in being in the events before 1914, and the more I reflect on what I observed and heard, both at Berlin and at Strassburg, the more I confess to myself that we were, with a few exceptions, stricken with blindness in not seeing the big thunder clouds gathering on the horizon.

That is the reason why, overcoming my fear of being very incomplete, I have decided to set down, in a desultory manner, whatever events in my political past seem to me to present retrospective interest.





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# BEHIND THE SCENES IN THE REICHSTAG

## CHAPTER I

### HOW I ENTERED POLITICS

My Election—The Centre and the Members for Alsace-Lorraine—  
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Blackguardism—The Bird had Flown.

It was in 1898 that the electors of the *arrondissement* of Ribeauville offered me the candidature for a seat in the Reichstag. The Abbé Simonis, who, since 1874, had represented the fifth constituency of Alsace-Lorraine with so much joyous energy, had just retired from public life, at the same time as his colleague, Canon Guerber, who until then had carried out the mandate of the *arrondissement* of Guebwiller. This excellent M. Simonis had been condemned, a few months before, to pay a fine of 600 marks because, at a public meeting at which he had contested the candidature of Kreisdirektor Poehlmann, he allowed himself to quote the Alsatian proverb—"A man, a promise, or else a 'What do I care?' individual."

This misadventure—rather honourable than otherwise—

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had deeply grieved a man whose antecedents had been spotless until then.

But M. Simonis had a more serious reason for leaving the arena of public life. He belonged to the generation of early protestors who considered that they had carried out all the obligations of their mandate by going to Berlin merely twice or thrice a year to make heard there the voice of Alsace-Lorraine, inconsolable through having been separated from France. Now, it happened that our two provinces, forcibly associated with the destiny of the German Empire, sometimes suffered cruelly from an interior legislation in the elaboration of which their representatives systematically refused to collaborate. Therefore the electors had finished, not by getting tired of protesting, but by requesting their deputies to take a more active part in the work of the Imperial Parliament. M. Guerber and M. Simonis, however, would not consent to modify their purely negative attitude, so an appeal had to be made to new men.

The candidatures in the vacant constituencies were offered to several laymen—manufacturers, doctors, and lawyers, all of whom, in spite of earnest requests, politely refused. Thus, a week before the day fixed for the elections, I was begged to accept the struggle, whilst Canon Roellinger, Curé of Guebwiller, was putting up for M. Guerber's seat.

Truth to tell, there was more danger than profit in entering public life at the time of the dictatorship and the *régime* of passports. Terror had reigned in Alsace since 1888, and, though the election of Jacques Preiss at Colmar in 1891 and that of Ignace Spiess at Schlestadt in 1896 denoted an awakening of public opinion, the reprisals which had immediately been made by the Secre-



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tary of State, von Puttkamer, seemed to foreshadow fresh acts of persecution against both the elected candidates and their electors.

Owing to the very short time at our disposal, it was necessary to improvise manifestoes, posters, distributions of bulletins and public meetings. It was a week of excitement. Fortunately, our electors were most determined. Roellinger and I were elected at the first ballot with respectable majorities, although we had three opponents: a Governmental Catholic, a Liberal, and a Socialist.

Out of the fifteen seats of the annexed provinces, the Alsace-Lorraine group, which had accepted the heritage of the protestors, secured eleven, whilst the Socialists won three and the Germans had to be satisfied with a single semi-success at Zabern. In fact, Dr. Hoeffel, who represented the little town of the Lower Rhine, which was later made illustrious by Lieutenant von Forstner and Colonel von Reutter, got himself received at the Reichstag as a guest (*Hospitant*) in the fraction of the Independent Conservatives (*Reichspartei*), among whom, moreover, he played a very obscure part.

Already at that time the immigrants and the Government had but one object—that of forcing the Deputies of Alsace-Lorraine to join the groups of the Imperial Parliament. For having responded to that earnest request during the preceding legislatures, MM. Petri and von Bulach had lost their seats. However, the Socialists, who relegated national claims to the background in favour of political questions, were not restrained by the same scruples, and their representatives, from Hickel to Bueb, had deliberately joined the Parliamentary group of the Extreme Left, which from that time gave them the support of the Germans.

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In the meantime the immigrants had tried to penetrate all the political organisations of Alsace-Lorraine, in order to precipitate the evolution desired by the Ministry of Strassburg. In 1891 I had written on that subject a pamphlet, entitled, "Irons-nous au Centre ?" ("Shall we Join the Centre ?"), which caused rather a stir, and in which I combated any union whatsoever with the Catholic party of the Reichstag, because that union would have indicated to everyone the renunciation of our national claims, and would have prevented us presenting and defending our private resolutions in Parliament.

During the following twenty-three years I had to combat, both in my newspaper and at our meetings of delegates, the ever-recurring idea of rallying to the Centre. Several times my adversaries, headed by the German professor Martin Spahn and the Alsatians Muller and Didio, demanded my expulsion from the party. They never succeeded in obtaining anything save derisive minorities for their motions, whether frank or hypocritical ones.

But these recollections necessitate going back. My pamphlet "Irons-nous au Centre ?" brought me numerous and enthusiastic letters of encouragement, like the one which followed it closely—"Parti catholique et Coteries" ("The Catholic Party and Coteries"). It was doubtless owing to this circumstance that, in December, 1893, I was entrusted by M. Jung, the printer, with the management of the *Journal de Colmar*, a bi-weekly journal printed entirely in the French language.

Before leaving the parochial ministry (at that time I was curate in the artisan parish of St. Joseph at Mülhausen, a parish justly celebrated for its numerous and prosperous social works) I called on the Bishop of Strassburg, Mgr. Fritzen, who still occupies the see of St. Arbogast. And

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this is what the prelate, whose two brothers were then members of the Reichstag, said to me :

“I am aware that the politics which you will uphold in your paper are not mine ; but I do not think I have the right to forbid you to defend the interests of the population in your own manner. In ecclesiastical matters you will obviously remain subject to my control. As to the rest, write whatever you judge fit. It is not for me, as a bishop, to meddle with politics properly so called.”

I asked him for nothing more. Let me add that Mgr. Fritzen kept strictly to this line of conduct and never attempted to give me the least imperative advice. It sometimes happened that I discussed with him, with absolute freedom, problems of public life ; yet he carefully refrained from exercising the slightest pressure on me. Better still, on several occasions, and without my knowledge, he undertook to defend me.

Here is the proof. In 1897, at Colmar, I had been elected a County Councillor, and at the first meeting of the Council I had to take the oath required by the law, “I swear obedience to the Constitution and fidelity to the Emperor.”

This question of the taking of the political oath had been raised immediately after the annexation in 1873, on the occasion of the County Council elections. The first councillors to be elected having refused to take the oath, the prefects suspended the sitting. Gambetta, consulted by the interested parties, very wisely replied, “Compulsion does not stand in the way of the exercise of liberty. If you do not take verbally an oath which your heart disavows, all the seats will pass to creatures of the German Government. So observe this simple formality, which



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does not necessitate the slightest renunciation of your regrets and your hopes."

The advice was followed. Nevertheless, it was always horribly painful to pronounce the fatal formula. The day after I had been obliged to undergo this hard necessity, I published in my paper an article of which the following is a summary: "The political oath, because one is obliged to take it, does not admit of the obligation of conscience. Moreover, though I have indeed promised obedience to the Constitution, it is with the firm desire to modify it. Finally, the promise of fidelity to the Emperor ought not to prevent a Republican (and I have always been one) from trying to change the *régime*, provided that in attempting to do so he does not depart from legal methods."

The article produced a scandal. The Governmental Press left no stone unturned in attacking the priest who had dared to contest the holiness of the oath. Now, a few weeks later, the Bishop of Strassburg addressed to me a letter in which he announced that the Pope, Leo XIII, sent me, through his mediation, "his whole-hearted benediction." As no explanation accompanied this mis-sive, I called on Mgr. Fritzen to ask him for enlightenment.

"I did not want," replied the prelate, smiling, "to tell you sooner of the plot hatched against you. After your article on the political oath, the Statthalter (Prince von Hohenlohe-Langenburg) sent to the Holy See, through the intermediary of the Prussian representative, a long memorandum, or, to speak more accurately, a virulent indictment. The Pope sent me the papers. I undertook your defence. Here are both the Prince's speech for the prosecution and mine for the defence. As you see, Rome says 'we' are in the right."

Indeed, the two documents—copies of which I have

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preserved—establish both the incommensurable stupidity of the Statthalter and the perfect correctness of the bishop, who, without even informing me, had protected me by his high authority.

A second denunciation from Prince von Hohenlohe met with the same fate the year after.

An amusing detail. When, eight years later, in 1905, I had the honour to be presented to Cardinal Rampolla, he welcomed me with the following words :

“ Well, are you satisfied with the reply we formerly sent your Statthalter ? ”

The great friend of France, who was and who remained a Cardinal to the end, was once more to be recognised in this joyous exclamation. One had only to see the mischievous smile with which he emphasised it to be able to guess that the former Secretary of State to Leo XIII had been glad to be in a position to play a good trick on our professional Germanisers.

Mgr. Fritzen had once more to take up my defence in the spring of 1914, and under particularly difficult circumstances. My lecturing campaign in France, in the month of January of the preceding year, had provoked in the whole of the German Press the most violent protests and caused a torrent of shameful insults to descend on my head. For several weeks each post brought me a dozen letters or post-cards on which the Bothes, belonging to all classes of society, exhausted themselves by expressing insulting words and ridiculous threats. Moreover, the Leipzig court had been requested to charge me with high treason, and questions had been asked regarding my case in the two Parliaments of Berlin and Strassburg. During the whole session I was boycotted by the majority of my colleagues. On the other hand, my electoral com-

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mittee and the meeting of the Alsace-Lorraine Centre deliberately refused to separate themselves from me.

The storm had already partly subsided when, in February, 1914, I called on the Bishop of Strassburg.

"You come in the nick of time," he declared. "It is barely a week ago since the Imperial Chancellor, Von Bethmann-Hollweg, sitting in the very chair you occupy, earnestly entreated me to take the most severe disciplinary measures against you. I replied to him (and you will not be surprised at this) that I deplored your political attitude, but that I was not in a position to censor it. You misemploy, perhaps, your liberty as a citizen, but, as a priest, I have nothing to reproach you with. Under these conditions, I should make an ill use of my ecclesiastical authority by exercising it in a matter in which all Catholics retain their entire independence."

A last time Mgr. Fritzen had to devote his attention to me; and again he acted with all the circumspection the situation demanded. It was in the early days of the month of September, 1914. I had just published in the *Echo de Paris* several articles signed "An ex-Member of the Reichstag." The German Press naturally made use of the most violent language against the "traitor." The military authorities demanded of the Bishop of Strassburg that he proceed to execute me in due form. So Mgr. Fritzen published in the Catholic journals of Alsace a letter in which he deplored my attitude, "which was contrary to my oath" (see above), and announced that he . . . removed me from the list of Alsatian priests in the *ordo* of his diocese.

Need I add that this last measure is inoperative? A priest can only be detached from his diocese as the result of a canonical trial. The lists of the *ordo* have merely a



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documentary value. They have no legal value. The Bishop of Strassburg, therefore, got out of a difficulty by a veritable practical joke.

The Bishop of Metz, Mgr. Bentzler, had to take a similar measure against Canon Collin. It is true that he added the following words to his public letter, "I am opening a canonical legal inquiry against M. Collin. But as circumstances do not permit me to serve him with the indictment, I am under the necessity of postponing the proceedings *sine die*." As in all probability it will be the future Bishop of Metz, Mgr. Collin, who will conduct the case against Canon Collin, there is every reason to believe that the sentence will not be too severe.

However that may be, Mgr. Bentzler proved himself on this occasion to be as witty as Mgr. Fritzen. I should never have believed two Germans capable of such humorous fancies.

When I took over the management of the *Journal de Colmar* it had 400 subscribers. Four weeks later there were 3,500. I attribute this success partly to the intervention of the Procurator of the Correctional Tribunal, Herr Bernays, who brought a sensational action against me. In the early days of January, 1894, I had published an article containing the following phrase, "The plan for the canalisation of the Hardt is lying about wretchedly in the portfolios of the Ministry." The Public Prosecutor saw in these words an insult to Herr von Puttkamer and opened proceedings. The sitting was epic. The Public Prosecutor began his speech for the prosecution with these words, "Wetterlé's journal is frivolous, it violates all the rules of propriety, and it has assumed the mission of exciting hatred between the people and the notable men of the town, the Government and the persons under

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its jurisdiction, the natives and the German immigrants." He spoke for two full hours in this amiable manner and ended by demanding a sentence of four months' imprisonment. Preiss defended me. He was superb in his rejoinder. The trial ended in an acquittal. During the sitting the court was crowded to overflowing. The next day subscriptions began to flow in. My paper was launched.

However, I had not always the same success before the courts. My judicial record is very bad: twelve fines, ranging from 40 to 600 marks, plus two months' imprisonment.

One of these lawsuits was extremely funny. In the course of a controversy with a brother-journalist of Colmar I had written: "*Le journal X . . . pétarade et rue dans les brancards.*" Although the metaphor was not applied to a person, the manager of the paper in question thought fit to bring an action against me. To the huge delight of the judges, counsel for the plaintiff devoted his attention to the most improper jests around the word "*pétarade.*" I pointed out to him that Saint-Simon had written, "The princesses descended to the garden and indulged in all manner of *pétarades*"; and that one could not honestly admit that the celebrated author of the *Mémoires* intended to accuse those young and lively persons of improprieties. But this did not help me in the least. I was condemned to pay a fine of 100 francs, and one of the grounds of the judgment solemnly set forth that, in the opinion of all grammarians, *pétarade* is equivalent to "*une salve de p . . .*" This lesson in French was well worth the fee I had to pay for it.

Every time that I appeared at the bar the same difficulties of translation occurred. Public prosecutors and

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judges grew pale over dictionaries in order to prove me guilty of the blackest designs. My counsel in turn were obliged to consult the most learned lexicons to establish my innocence. These philological discussions amused the gallery immensely.

I do not glory in my convictions. Nevertheless, I am bound to point out that in the text of all the judgments against me there was always the following clause, "Die antideutschen Gesinnungen des Angeklagten sind gerichtsbekannt" ("The anti-German sentiments of the accused are notorious"). This got me an increased penalty each time. The judicial authorities, moreover, never failed to extend the discussion to articles which were not incriminated. All the actions brought against me were for constructive offences.

Honest Hosemann, a Public Prosecutor whose candour was proverbial, said to me one day, "We guess your intentions; but you always know how to graze the dangerous line without overstepping it. But take care, for at the first false step we shall not fail to catch you."

I was to make that false step in 1909. The director of the Lycée of Colmar, Gneisse, a passionate Pan-Germanist pedagogue, had published in the *Strassburger Post* an article in which he extolled the foundation of a league against the "Frenchifying" of Alsace-Lorraine. Gneisse was the most grotesque personage one can imagine. Hansi has immortalised him in several of his celebrated caricatures. A controversy sprang up between the pedant and myself. Gneisse was brutal; I replied to him jestingly. One of my articles I adorned with a portrait of my adversary, drawn by Hansi's masterly hand. Now, it happened that one day a young collegian, the son of one of my friends, came to see me at my office. Gneisse's



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portrait was lying on my desk. The boy asked me for it in order to give it to his father. He was, however, rather imprudent in showing it to a few of his fellow pupils.

For once they had me. Gneisse demanded a prosecution. The Secretary of State tried to make the pedant understand that he was about to cover himself with immortal ridicule. But in vain. The Public Prosecutor's office had to intervene. Nobody can imagine what that trial was. My counsel, Preiss and Blumenthal, riddled the director with epigrams. It was pitiful to look at the wretched man whilst he strove, with the most imperturbable seriousness, to ward off the shafts of the defence. The president had several times to threaten to clear the court, so noisily did the public which had crowded there give vent to its amusement.

The case came on twice. Hansi had been condemned in July to pay a fine of 600 marks. As I was, in that month, protected by my Parliamentary immunity, they could not bring me to trial until the recess of the two Chambers in September. So Gneisse was obliged to submit twice to those painful sittings.

Nevertheless, the court sentenced me to two months' imprisonment and refused my application for a cross-action. The offence had been very insignificant, but the sentence appeared to everyone, even to the immigrants, to be very severe.

The day after my condemnation the German officials entreated me to ask for a pardon. During three months, I was the object of the most earnest solicitations on the part of the authorities—and even the members of the Ministry—who feared the effects of my condemnation on public opinion. To put an end to them, I gave myself up as a prisoner on December 15th, at Colmar.

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A few days before I had had an interview with Herr Petri, the Under-Secretary of State at the Ministry of Justice, and had asked him, as a matter of curiosity, if I should be allowed to read and write in prison. The next day the Governmental organs reported that, fearing the severities of the penitentiary *régime*, I had humbly solicited the Minister's kindness. Thus the Germans always remain faithful to themselves. They are obliged to besmirch the reputation of their adversaries when they cannot subdue them.

I immediately sent a letter to Herr Petri, declaring my firm intention to be treated as a common prisoner. At the Ministry they were very worried by this new prank. The Reichstag was sitting at the time and the Landesausschuss was about to meet. They feared that questions would be asked.

On entering the prison, the governor had me immediately examined by a doctor. The interview was comic in the extreme.

"You suffer from stomach troubles," said Dr. Steinmetz to me, peremptorily.

"Not at all," I replied. "I'm as solid as the Pont-Neuf."

"But look at that swelling at the bottom of your ribs."

"I'm rather stout."

"It's a certain sign of difficult digestion, arising from dilatation of the stomach. The restaurant keeper who usually supplies the prison will bring your meals. Moreover, manual work would depress you. You will therefore be free to follow your habitual occupations. But as your stay here will be of short duration, it is needless to ask you to put on the usual prison dress."

That very evening they brought me a second mattress,

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again by doctor's orders. I was, in addition, authorised to receive three newspapers regularly.

The two months passed all the more rapidly because my lawyers and a few other friends came almost daily to bring me news of the outside world. It was thus that I heard that at Strassburg, at the opening of Parliament, my colleagues had placed a magnificent bouquet on my seat, and that Gneisse had once more served as a Turk's head for speakers during the Budget debate.

My term of imprisonment came to an end on February 15th, 1910, at 5.45. At four o'clock my warder came to tell me that a huge crowd was assembling in front of the prison. When I came out five thousand people were there to cheer me. A little girl, dressed in white, presented me with a bouquet. A carriage was waiting for me, and by my side Hansi, my friend Bourson, and my colleague Haegy took their seats. During half an hour the horses had to proceed at walking-pace through a crowd which grew denser as we approached the Rue Roesselmann, where I lived with my mother. At our flat, where every piece of furniture was covered with flowers, M. René Henry presented me with a superb statue of Jeanne d'Arc, on behalf of a group of French Deputies and journalists; whilst Hansi, in the name of a group of inhabitants of Colmar, handed me a bronze representing the patron saint of Alsace-Lorraine, St. Odile. The people of Strassburg had sent a bust, "L'Alsacienne," by Ringel d'Illzach.

The next day the entire Press of the country filled its columns with a narrative of this spontaneous demonstration. The anger of the Pan-Germans passed all bounds when, having gone to Paris a few days later, I received at my hotel a delegation of students of the Sorbonne, who came to present me with Larche's "Guerrier."



## HOW I ENTERED POLITICS

My imprisonment had another and a much more appreciable result. The *Journal de Colmar* had been a daily for several months past, but it still appeared in a small size. My friends gave me a great surprise by buying the machines necessary for transforming it into a sheet the size of *Le Matin*. So henceforth I had a more serious fighting organ at my disposal. On coming out of prison I changed the name of my journal, which became *Le Nouvelliste d'Alsace-Lorraine*.

What the Government had feared had come to pass. My conviction had turned against my persecutors.

Let me recall an incident *à propos* of this which made rather a stir. The wife of the Statthalter, Countess Wedel, a most amiable Swedish lady who had always striven to establish cordial relations between her husband and the Members of Parliament, used to give every year a *soirée*, at which she distributed, in the form of *objets de cotillon*, little souvenirs to her guests. Those who were unable to be present at this evening party received these little presents by post. Now, the Countess thought fit to send me in that way, whilst I was in prison, a silver match-box bearing her monogram. The gift was accompanied by a very friendly letter, in French, containing the following words, "If you would feel transitory satisfaction, take revenge; but if a durable satisfaction, pardon." Now, one of my lawyers, having come to visit me in prison, saw the Countess's souvenir and read her letter. He committed the imprudence of whispering a word about it to a German colleague, whom he thought was an honest man. This fellow, however, could think of nothing better than to send a fiery article to a Pan-German sheet, to protest against "this scandal." For several weeks Countess Wedel served as a target for the fury of all the scribbling

## BEHIND THE SCENES IN THE REICHSTAG

patriots on the other side of the Rhine. It would have required very little more to make this stupid affair the cause of a Ministerial crisis.

Of my journalistic life, which, however, was very fertile in little incidents, I will say but a few more words. I was taking my holidays in Switzerland at the beginning of July, 1914, when I received from M. Helmer, Hansi's lawyer, a letter containing the following words, "Take care! The action against you for high treason is still pending. The French translator to the Leipzig court told me last week that he was instructed by the tribunal to translate into German the lectures which you delivered last year in France. You would do well, therefore, to put your papers in a safe place, if you have not already done so. At the close of the parliamentary session they will certainly make a domiciliary visit at your house."

I returned to Colmar immediately. I am very conservative by temperament. My correspondence for twenty years, which will enable me to reconstitute in part the political history of Alsace-Lorraine during that long and interesting period, was heaped up in a large box which at all cost had to be sheltered from German curiosity, for among the letters thus collected together there were enough to compromise a hundred of my friends.

I had already been the victim of a manifest theft on the part of a German employee at the printing-office of my paper, this man having appropriated the bag in which I kept the thousand to fifteen hundred letters I had received from Alsace-Lorraine and France on leaving prison. The odious fellow found, however, in this voluminous correspondence only one really interesting document, a visiting card bearing a few amiable words from Baron von Bulach. Needless to say, he hastened to communicate it to the

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Pan-German organs, thus causing the greatest annoyance to the Secretary of State.

On July 15th (note the date) I handed the box containing my letters to a friend, who undertook to send them abroad. Now, at the goods-office they asked him to inscribe on the way-bill the following mention, "*Unpolitischen Inhalts*" ("The contents are not political.") Nothing can prove more clearly that, already at that time, Germany foresaw approaching international complications. My friend, in ignorance of the contents of the box, filled up the form, and the package was able to cross the frontier before the opening of hostilities.

When, on July 31st, the German authorities made a search at the offices of the *Nouvelliste* and at my private residence, they found, therefore, that the bird had flown. I had prepared for them a single but rather disagreeable surprise. On my desk, placed well in view, was the correspondence which I had exchanged during preceding years with Baron von Bulach. I doubt whether, on reading it, they experienced an unmixed pleasure.



## CHAPTER II

### ARRIVAL AT BERLIN

Ignace Spiess — The Reichstag Palace — The Speech from the Throne—The Galas—Cook's Agency—How they Work at the Reichstag—Double Mandates—At Home.

It was in November, 1898, that, accompanied by my newly elected colleagues of Alsace-Lorraine, I went to Berlin for the first time. Communications were still difficult in those days. We took sixteen hours to cover the 800 kilometres which separated our provinces from the Prussian capital, and the carriages placed at our disposal were inconvenient and badly warmed. Besides, it was necessary to change trains at Frankfort.

Berlin is a very ugly city. A few hours suffice to make a tour of inspection of its buildings, almost all modern ones. The old part has no *cachet*. As to the new, it is built in that odious Munich style which will be the eternal disgrace of German architects.

It was the excellent M. Spiess, member for Schlestadt, who did us the honours of Berlin. He had been elected two years before under circumstances which are worthy of being related. In 1893, when "the peace of the cemeteries"—to use the energetic expression of Jacques Preiss—reigned in Alsace-Lorraine, the Kreisdirektor Poehlmann of Schlestadt had offered himself as a candidate in his own

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parliamentary division. Never had official pressure been displayed with so much impudence. The German Sub-Prefect had made use of Governmental subventions and secret funds with unprecedented audacity. One instance, taken from a hundred. In a certain commune where the parsonage was in a bad state of repair, the official candidate had, on his own authority, ordered that they should immediately proceed with repairs which before he had considered inopportune. Not having obtained the majority in the Commune, the Kreisdirektor had the work stopped immediately, and for several weeks the parsonage was without a roof.

The election of the Sub-Prefect was contested. The Reichstag, which itself proceeds, with wise slowness, to examine the mandates, took three years to complete the inquiry. At last, in 1896, Poehlmann was invalidated.

Meanwhile, M. Spiess, Mayor of Schlestadt, who was reproached with not having exerted himself sufficiently on behalf of Poehlmann's candidature, had been removed by Secretary of State von Puttkamer. This wholly unjustifiable measure gave rise to stirring debates during the sittings of the Landesausschuss (the Alsace-Lorraine Parliament), of which M. Spiess was a member, and aroused violent reaction throughout the entire country.

So the electors of Schlestadt offered their former mayor the candidature of the vacant seat in the Reichstag. Never did an election give rise to struggles so Homeric. The agents of the Government seized the Alsatian candidate's manifestoes, prohibited or disturbed his public meetings, terrified the population in the villages, and took down innumerable names and addresses with a view to prosecutions. Nevertheless, M. Spiess scored a signal

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victory. His election marked an evolution in the public opinion of the annexed provinces and prefaced the Governmental defeat of 1898.

Ignace Spiess was an honest and conscientious merchant, as hardworking as he was intelligent. He had for a long time belonged to the group of those moderate men who, placing themselves on the ground of accomplished facts, strove, whilst carefully safeguarding their dignity, to collaborate with the Government in the economic restoration of the country. During long years he had been, under the direction of Canon Winterer, the veteran of our political struggles, one of the most attentively listened to, and also one of the most courageous of the orators of the Delegation. He did not take up an attitude of systematic opposition ; but, every time a question of principle arose in the Strassburg Parliament, he stood up boldly to von Puttkamer, who was the most hot-headed, most brutal, and also most despised of all the Ministers of Alsace-Lorraine.

When dismissed by the Secretary of State, M. Spiess considered it no longer his duty to observe the same reserve as formerly and became one of the most determined of the leaders of the national opposition. Once more the Government's surly policy caused a semi-Moderate to join the ranks of the ultra-Nationalists. How many times, during my long connection with the two Parliaments, have I not followed, with amused eye, the evolution of my colleagues, who formerly were considered, wrongly or rightly, to have exchanged their independence for a mess of pottage in the form of Governmental favours. All those *ralliés*, discouraged by the Ministry's violence, came back to us, one after the other, expressing their disgust in the same stereotyped phrase :



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“No, really, there is no means of living with those brutes.”

The most striking conversion was that of M. Gunzert, one of the rare Alsatians who, immediately after the annexation, entered the German Administration. At first Gunzert was well rewarded for this betrayal; he obtained rapid promotion in the magistracy, numerous decorations, an official candidature; nothing was withheld from the turncoat. And yet the hour of conversion struck for him as for the others. He had accepted the presidency of a committee for the raising of a monument to the memory of the French soldiers who fell for their country on the Giesberg, near Wissemburg. That was enough to make him suspect to the Government and to subject him to the vilest insults. With a tardy return of energy, M. Gunzert recovered the convictions of his youth, and he also, one day, exclaimed in my presence:

“It is impossible to be on good terms with those brutes.”

Ignace Spiess did not have so long a path to follow to become once more a militant Nationalist. On entering the Reichstag, he took his place in the then very small group of Deputies for Alsace-Lorraine and became the most staunch political friend of Jacques Preiss.

Spiess acted as our introducer to the Imperial Parliament. The members of the Reichstag enter their palace by a reserved door opening on to the Thiergarten. Spiess pointed out to us the extravagant symbol which decorated it. Above the door was a powerful stone lion, rampant, holding under its left paw a ball on which one could read the words “Elsass-Lothringen.” The representatives of our country had several times asked that this humiliating symbol of our servitude should be removed. But they had not succeeded in effecting this.

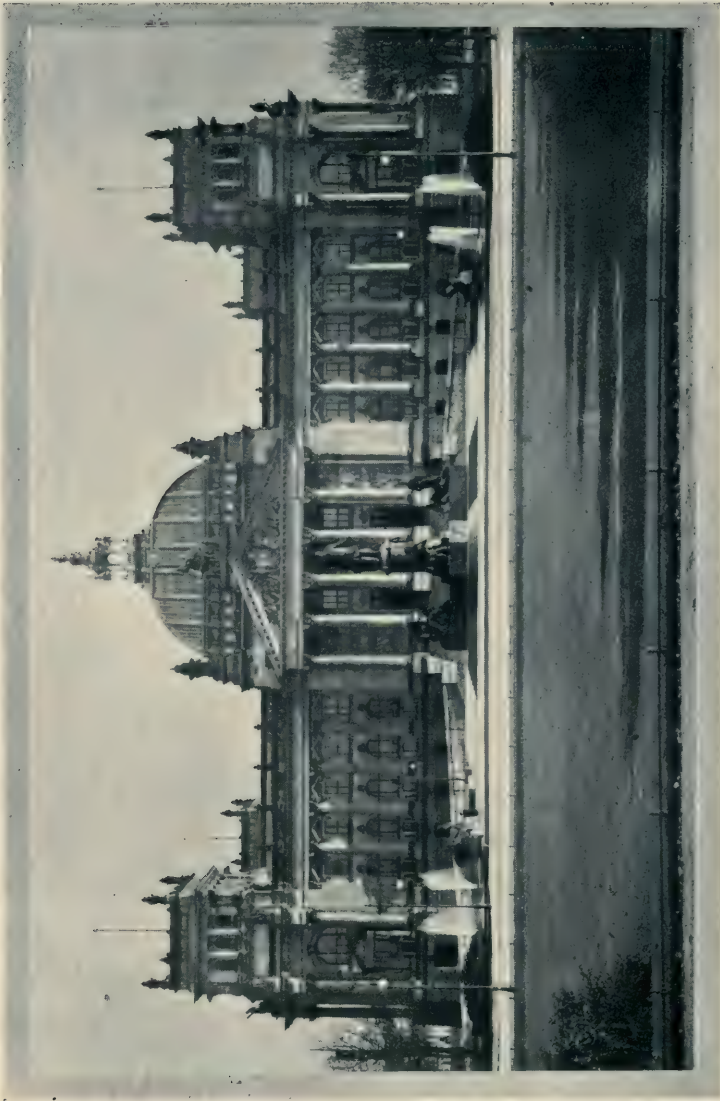
## BEHIND THE SCENES IN THE REICHSTAG

Prince von Aremberg was more fortunate in 1906 when he had removed from the Reichstag a huge picture which for several weeks was hung above the President's seat. This canvas represented William I, Bismarck, and Moltke on horseback on the Sedan battle-field. In the foreground a German soldier was stretching a French flag under the hoofs of the old Emperor's war-horse. This stupid and odious provocation was a source of constant joy to the Prussian Conservatives. Prince von Aremberg, a member of the Centre, considered, however, that the insult to conquered France was too indecent, so he succeeded in getting the picture relegated to the room—far from the eyes of the public—where the Budget Committee sat.

The Reichstag Palace is an enormous cube of freestone, flanked by four massive towers. William II himself, whose artistic taste, however, is very little developed, declared one day that the gilded cupola which surmounts the centre of the building was "the height of bad taste" (*"der Gipfel der Geschmacklosigkeit"*).

Decorative *motifs* abound inside the building. There is a bewildering excess of wainscoting, bas-reliefs, statues, frescoes, and stained-glass windows. Now, you may search in vain amidst all this accumulation of ornaments for a single emblem which reveals to the visitor the destination of the palace. Paintings and sculpture glorify exclusively the Hohenzollern dynasty, when they do not represent subjects which, in that place, are grotesque in the extreme. What, indeed, are those huge stained-glass windows which remind us of the gallant adventures of Romeo and Juliet, and the tragic destiny of Othello and Desdemona, doing there?

Above the door where the members enter, another



[London Electrotyle Agency.]

THE REICHSTAG.





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window of colossal dimensions depicts a thickset Germania, around whom the twenty-five German States, symbolised by children in carnival dress, dance in a ring. The stout red-faced girl holds in her hands the two ends of a ribbon, displaying the colours of the Empire, which winds round the waists of all the dancers. One cannot imagine a more foolish or uglier allegory. The German, who, however, in practical life, proves he possesses a most positive mind, always disconcerts one by these outbursts of sickly sentimentalism. Thus, the guides who show foreigners over the Reichstag Palace every morning never miss pointing out to them that the building is constructed of stone and wood from all the Confederate States—a fresh material symbol of imperial unity.

Bismarck was right in saying, “The Latins were civilised ten centuries before we were, and we have never caught up to them.”

The interior arrangement of the Reichstag Palace is, however, luxurious and relatively convenient. There are lobbies abundantly supplied with armchairs; a big gallery over 96 yards long, where the members can take walking exercise; bath-rooms, a gymnasium with complicated apparatus, a well-stocked library, a reading-room with 400 German and foreign papers, spacious writing-rooms, a number of small reception rooms, private offices with telephones and couches, hair-dressing saloon, a pharmacy, and a restaurant. Everything has been foreseen to enable the representatives of the German people to find in the building itself all the pleasures of life.

On the other hand, the acoustic quality of the assembly hall is very defective. It is true that the public of the galleries alone complain. At the Reichstag no attention whatever is paid to speeches delivered at the tribune.

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Rare are the speakers who retain the attention of their colleagues. The others speak in front of empty benches, or in the midst of the deafening noise of private conversations.

I was present at the opening sitting of the Reichstag. The ceremony took place in the White Room at the Imperial Palace. We were shown up to it by a back staircase. All those of my colleagues who were officers of the reserve had put on their uniforms. The throne—a very modest one—was situated opposite us, raised a couple of steps from the ground, between two windows. It was surmounted by a canopy. On the left stood the members of the Federal Council, in gold embroidered coats, covered with decorations. On the right were the generals in full-dress uniform. Along the wall the Palace Guard, in uniforms dating back to the days of Frederick, presented arms, whilst the officers, with little three-cornered hats on their heads, held beribboned shepherds' crooks.

I have described elsewhere the grotesque procession which precedes the Emperor on the occasion of these official ceremonies—a procession with heralds-at-arms wearing embroidered dalmaticas, a swarm of pages in knee breeches and pink doublets, and generals carrying on cushions the insignia of imperial dignity.

The Emperor, who wore a scarlet cloak over his white cuirassier's uniform, saluted ceremoniously as he passed by. He was followed by the princes of his family. The Crown Prince took his place on the first step of the throne, to the right of his father. Then William II, after putting on his helmet, which up to then he had carried under his arm, took the Crown speech from the Chancellor's hands and began to read it with a nasal twang. He laid stress on the principal phrases by roaring a little louder



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and casting an authoritative glance at the assembly. Whereupon the members of the Reichstag showed their approbation by loud cries, in chorus, of "Sehr richtig! Sehr richtig!"—"Hear! Hear!"

When the reading of the speech was over, the Chancellor declared the session of the Reichstag open, and whilst the audience vociferated the "Hoch! Hoch! Hoch!" required by Court etiquette, the Imperial procession formed anew and disappeared. The ceremony was as paltry as it was amusing. The members had the look of little boys on whom a severe schoolmaster had imposed an imposition and who had no right to resist. In fact, the Reichstag cannot send the Emperor an address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Curiosity led me to attend this theatrical ceremony. I was not to be caught again.

I had also the opportunity, in those days, of attending a gala performance at the Berlin Opera House. The Marshal of the Court, according to custom, had sent a certain number of invitations to the Reichstag. There were only forty of us there that day, so one of the tickets was handed to me. I gave way to temptation. Once more it was necessary to wear a special costume: dress-coat, knee breeches, silk stockings, and buckled shoes. Fortunately, there are Court outfitters in Berlin who hire out these costumes by the day for 20 to 25 marks. I must confess that I felt some disgust when pulling on those breeches, the freshness of which, through having clothed so many unknown legs, had departed. Nevertheless, in the evening, in company with some thirty colleagues, I occupied modestly an orchestra stall, whilst in the boxes and dress circles the diplomatists, high officials, and general officers posed in their shining uniforms, side

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by side with their wives and daughters, all of whom, in low-necked dresses, had donned their finest jewellery. The scene was marvellous, and yet I was to carry away a mournful impression of that evening. Indeed, as soon as the Emperor and his guests arrived the whole house rose. Silently, the men bent themselves double and the women made a deep bow; after which, on the curtain rising, a chilly silence reigned during the whole performance. There was no applause except when the Sovereign gave the signal; no private conversation, even in a low voice. Moreover, no one followed the actors' play. All eyes—in which one could read veritable devotion—were directed towards the Imperial box. After two hours of that torture I was glad to find myself once more under the Lindens, in the midst of the crowd, which, notwithstanding the cold, was standing there gazing at the wall "behind which something was happening."

One does not go twice to so tedious a spectacle.

In November, 1898, at the time of my second journey to Berlin, I found myself sitting in the railway carriage opposite a young and distinguished-looking man. I had a long conversation with him. He was a representative of Cook's Agency. He was about to accept delivery of the Emperor William and his suite for the voyage of that Sovereign to Constantinople and through Palestine. The agency had agreed, for the sum of three millions, on the following route: Venice, Constantinople, Jerusalem, Trieste. Tips were included in this fixed price. They are economical at the Prussian Court.

This voyage to the East was, however, to have its epilogue in the Reichstag. The Chancellor's travelling expenses had not been set down in the contract with the English agency, consequently the Imperial Parliament

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was asked to pay an additional 60,000 marks. The majority, with very bad grace, consented to do so.

It is not generally known that the German Emperor has no civil list and does not receive an allowance for expenses as head of the Germanic Confederation. William II has, therefore, to be content with his Prussian civil list of 17,000,000 marks and the revenues from his private fortune, about which we possess only incomplete particulars. The King of Prussia owns about 205,000 acres of land and 300 residences in Germany. It is also known that William II started a porcelain manufactory for the output of which there is great competition among the courtiers and seekers after titles and decorations. He is likewise an important shareholder in the Krupp works, whilst some people claim that he has invested a considerable capital in British and American enterprises.

However that may be, the Court remains faithful to the old Prussian traditions of economy—I was almost going to say of niggardliness. The presents and tips which the Emperor distributes in the course of his travels are lamentably mean.

On several occasions the Chancellor attempted to obtain from the Reichstag certain *frais de représentation* for the “needy” Sovereign, but a deaf ear was always turned to these demands. To indemnify one whose duty it is to be the first among “equals” would, in the opinion of the Imperial Parliament, do injury to the federal character of the Empire.

Parties in the Reichstag are organised in a military manner. When the leaders of the groups have concluded, amidst the mystery of secret deliberations, advantageous compromises, everyone knows beforehand what the speakers, delegated by the various fractions of the assembly,



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will say at the tribune. "*Bestellete Arbeit*" ("Bespoke work") say the initiated, who take no further interest in speeches which are intended solely for the electors.

As it is the leaders who, almost without control, do all the parliamentary work, who choose the spokesmen of their parties and submit their declarations to a rigorous preliminary censorship, the members who have not the honour of belonging to the directing committee of their group do not even take the trouble to study the Budget or read the various Bills. They vote to order. Nothing further is asked of them, and they easily resign themselves to this obscure *rôle*.

I do not believe there exists a Parliament in the world which does less personal work than the Reichstag. The reports of the committees, which are merely short, dry analyses of the proceedings, are almost always drawn up by Government secretaries and are simply signed by the chairmen.

At the time I entered the Reichstag, the number of those who attended was almost always ridiculously small. Out of 398 members, barely 60 attended the sittings. How many times colleagues, belonging to a big committee and therefore obliged to remain in Berlin, have expressed their surprise at my assiduity.

"Whatever are you doing here?" they used to ask me. "Wait until you're telegraphed for."

Indeed, every time there was to be an important vote, the Director of the Reichstag, advised by the party leaders, sent urgent telegrams in all directions to call together the impenitent strikers. It thus happened that three or four times a year the Parliament was full. In ordinary times the lobbies were empty. I recollect that at the time when the reform of the Artisans' Insurance Bill was voted

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there were exactly seven members in the House. The President took a pleasure, after each vote, by sitting down or standing up, in noting that the clause had been "adopted by a big majority."

Voting by delegation is unknown at the Reichstag. Only the votes of the members present are counted. A single member may, it is true, point out that there is not a quorum (half plus one of the elected), and in that case the sitting must be suspended. But it hardly ever happens that recourse is had to this expedient to adjourn a vote. The reason for this is very simple. As soon as the parties have decided on their line of conduct, they know mathematically how many votes will be assured for the various clauses of the Bill and the amendments proposed. As each Bill, as elsewhere, is read three times, and as, henceforth, in case of dispute, the party leaders have the resource, before the final vote, of mobilising the whole of their military forces, every surprise is eliminated.

That is so true that, when by chance those present gave a majority to the Opposition, the Opposition itself proposed the adjournment of the vote until the true majority was sufficiently represented. The absent ones would never have pardoned a disagreeable and costly journey to Berlin simply to exercise their right of vote, by standing up or sitting down, for a few seconds.

I say "costly journey" advisedly. In fact, until 1906 the members of the Reichstag received no parliamentary indemnity. Moreover, there was no refreshment-room at the Reichstag, but a restaurant where all the refreshments had to be paid for. Finally, the members enjoyed travelling on the railways only between their residence and Berlin, and that only during the sessions. One can understand

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that the number of those present was always reduced to a minimum.

In order to recruit candidates, the parties were obliged to offer seats in the Reichstag to members of particular Parliaments who received an indemnity. Still, these holders of double mandates interested themselves more in the legislation of the States than in that of the Empire. Only the Prussian Deputies, whose Landtag sat at Berlin, could easily attend the sittings of the Reichstag. Every time an important vote was to take place they were summoned by telephone. This circumstance explains the preponderating influence the Prussians had been able to secure in the Imperial Parliament.

However that may be, the representatives of other States came but rarely to Berlin, because in so doing they suffered a double loss : expense without any compensation, and the loss of their daily indemnity in their particular Parliament.

Prince von Bülow, after the stormy debates on the increase of direct taxes, devised a means of improving the attendance of members of the Reichstag by according them a parliamentary indemnity and at the same time, still for the duration of the sessions, a pass on all the railways of the Empire.

The Germans, however, have so complicated a mentality that the most judicious reforms assume a strange character in their country. The indemnity was fixed at a maximum of 3,000 marks (£150). They divided it into monthly sums : 200 marks for the month of November, 300 for December, 400 for January, 500 for February, 600 for March, and 1,000 for the whole period after Easter.

From these monthly allowances there were deductions of 20 marks from those whose names were not to be found



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on the attendance lists, or who failed to take part in a nominal vote.

Why all these absurd formalities ? The reason for them was very simple. The shorter the sessions were, the larger the number of presence-counters. The Chancellor, therefore, arranged for all the important Bills to be brought on for discussion after Easter. As at that time the members' chief anxiety was to return home as quickly as possible, whilst receiving the larger part of their indemnity, the discussion was inevitably shortened.

The pass on the railways of the Empire also served as a bribe. When the end of the session drew near the Chancellor informed the members—in this case without any beating about the bush—that if, before leaving, they voted such and such a Bill to which the Government attached special importance, the Reichstag would not be closed but merely adjourned, which meant that during the holidays the members could continue to travel at the expense of the public. Rarely did the majority resist this tempting prospect ; and it was thus that the Imperial Parliament was adjourned three years in succession, which constituted a record.

Another advantage, moreover, arose from this adjournment. The closure is supposed in Germany to entail the annulling of all the work of the permanent or special committees. The reform of the Civil Code, which was thus constantly begun again *ab ovo*, not only after each legislature, but also after each session, occupied the Reichstag for more than twenty successive years.

Prince von Bülow, who was the great promoter of Pan-Germanism, saw clearly the advantages which the Central Government would derive from the granting of a parliamentary indemnity to members of the Reichstag.

## BEHIND THE SCENES IN THE REICHSTAG

What he specially aimed at was a diminution of the number of double mandates. Indeed, Deputies who belonged to two Parliaments were quite naturally particularists, by virtue of the principle which has been embodied in its most original form in the German proverb—"The shirt is nearer the body than the coat." Every time that a conflict over legal capacity took place between the Empire and the States, the holders of double mandates, fearing to alienate the electors of their particular district, energetically opposed Prussian attempts at monopolisation.

Thus arose perpetual and increasing difficulties for Imperialist militarism, which was anxious, above all, to converge all the energies of the nation towards the great war of conquests.

From the day on which the members of the Reichstag were remunerated, and especially on which, thanks to an ingenious system of stoppages of payment, those who belonged to two Parliaments received an indemnity taken in the lump which was smaller than that of their colleagues who sat in only one legislative assembly, the parties, who no longer found themselves faced with a candidates' strike, devoted their attention to suppressing double mandates as much as possible.

The effects expected from this measure were not long in becoming apparent. The number of attendances rose progressively (in recent years the quorum was always exceeded), and the members, sitting solely in the Reichstag, freed themselves from particularist cares, to devote themselves heart and soul to the interests of the Empire. Prince von Bülow had attained his end. The counterpoise of the policy of the States had disappeared. Henceforth nothing could arrest the Imperial Parliament on the path of aggressive Imperialism.

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But let us return to the Parliament of before 1906. The members led there, associated with a few loyal ones, most of them attached to big committees, a life of ease. The four to five dozen Deputies, lost in the huge building, enjoyed there all the pleasures of life. A very numerous staff surrounded them with a thousand engaging attentions. The sofas at the end of the assembly hall were not crowded, so that during wearisome speeches one could quietly have a nap there. I have seen my colleagues stretch out at full length in order to sleep the better.

In that respect, I must also point out that there is an absolute disregard as to dress in the Imperial Parliament. The members of the Executive, like the Chancellor, the Secretaries of State, and the Plenipotentiaries of the Federal Council, wear fancy jackets. Herr Scheidemann, the Socialist leader who has been so much talked about during the present war, alone departed from this rule during the few weeks he was Vice-President. Never was there a more impeccable frock-coat or a more carefully curled beard seen in the Reichstag than on the days when the "austere" Socialist occupied the presidential chair.

Scheidemann was not the only Socialist, however, who took particular care over his toilet. Sudekum was regarded in the Imperial Parliament as "the arbiter of fashion," and, indeed, his brilliant waistcoats and sumptuous ties were the admiration and aroused the envy of Conservative members themselves.



## CHAPTER III

### THE PARTIES OF THE REICHSTAG

The Centre and the Alsatians—Eugen Richter and his Friends—  
The Volkspartei—Hasse and Bassermann—The Conservatives  
—Catholics of the Centre—Martin Spahn—Hertling, Groeber,  
and Schaedler—Particularism and Imperialism.

ON our arrival in Berlin we were the object of interested attentions on the part of the members of the Centre and the Democrats, who sought to enlist us in their groups, at least as “guests” (*Hospitanten*). These good apostles thought that they would thus kill two birds with one stone: first of all lead us to renounce our national opposition, and, secondly, assure for their parties a stronger representation on committees! Indeed, seats on the committees are divided among the parties in accordance with their numerical importance.

But there was no reason in those days for our yielding to those earnest requests. In fact, the parties of the Left and Centre had not yet evolved towards Imperialism. The representatives of the oppressed nationalities—Poles, Danes, and Alsace-Lorrainers—still found solid support among themselves every time that they presented their grievances before the Reichstag. The Centre, which had barely freed itself from the clutches of the “*Kulturkampf*,” apparently remained faithful to the course given

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it by Windhorst, Reichensperger, and Mallinckrot. If a few signs of weakness were already to be observed in the case of Lieber and Spahn, the Groebers, Schaedlers, and Heims had not abdicated in the presence of the Pan-Germanism of Hasse. As to the Democratic Party, it was closely grouped around Eugen Richter, whose ultra-republicanism showed no signs of weakening.

Let us stop a moment to examine the interesting physiognomy of the last-named politician. Tall and stout; with a coarse-featured face enframed by a shaggy beard, and eyes that were almost always lowered as though to enable his mind to reflect the better, Eugen Richter had nothing of the appearance of a combatant. And yet few men exercised over Parliament an action so powerful as his. When the President granted him leave to speak, all the members gathered around him, for he never left his seat to mount the tribune. In a weak falsetto voice, the shrill sounds of which, however, carried far, the eloquent Democrat, without having recourse to any oratorical artifice, without a gesture, and without modulating his intonations, always produced, by the sole force of his arguments and the formidable action of his biting irony, the most profound impression on his listeners.

Bismarck, who could not stand contradiction, used to leave the assembly as soon as Richter began to speak. The older members of the Reichstag had retained the amusing recollection of these distracted flights of the Iron Chancellor.

Few debaters had the courage to try their strength with the terrible polemist. Kardorf and Kanitz, like Bebel and Singer, only reluctantly accepted the struggle with the man who always succeeded in having the laugh on his side.

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Richter, in a celebrated pamphlet, had formerly greatly weakened Bebel's credit by describing in detail the events which would happen in Germany on the morrow of the great social revolution, which the Socialist leader had imprudently fixed for 1898. Bebel never recovered from that straight blow.

The "great Eugen's" two lieutenants—Müller-Sagan and Lentzmann—vigorously seconded him. The former, more diplomatic by temperament, was later, when he succeeded Richter, to prepare the evolution of his party. The latter, more intransigent, did not flinch before the most revolutionary formulas.

I was in his society a great deal. He deplored the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine and understood quite well our resistance to German enterprise.

He it was who, one day, in the semicircle of the Reichstag, said to me in a loud and audible voice, as, with an angry gesture, he indicated the benches of the Extreme Left :

"I've come to wish that Germany was beaten on the battlefield, so that we could be rid of those fellows there."

Lentzmann, who was of apoplectic temperament, died before his time, as happened, moreover, to Müller-Sagan. The presidency of the Democratic group became very effeminate when occupied by those weaklings Müller-Meiningen and Wiemer, who were made by Bülow and Bethmann-Hollweg to crouch and cringe before militarism.

Müller-Meiningen is one of the most grotesque figures in the Reichstag. He reminds one of a mongrel which snaps and snarls furiously around the legs of all the passers-by. With his nose in the air, as though he was ever on the hunt, he seems to be always on the look-out for an opportunity of quarrelling. His speciality is a stupid anti-



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clericalism, which is not confined to great problems of political life but digresses amidst the twaddle of door-keepers. Müller-Meiningen, indeed, lingers behind to ferret about in the dustbins of vestries and to sift the most unknown devotional manuals in order to find there easy subjects for coarse jokes. I have never been able to understand how it is that this little Bavarian judge has been able to acquire the influence he possesses in the Imperial Parliament. Prince von Bülow, who made the political fortune of Müller-Meiningen because he knew he was ready for all sorts of dirty work, is too intelligent not to despise this vain and insupportable person.

The holder of the other big part in the Democratic Party, stout Wiemer, is more serious, although still more infatuated with himself. I knew him when he was a mere shorthand-writer in the Reichstag. He possesses a powerful voice, of which he makes an ill use. His pretentious speeches have nevertheless no action on Parliament.

On the other hand, Naumann is one of the most attentively listened to of the orators of the assembly. His huge body is surmounted by a very small head, and one is quite surprised to hear a thin voice, the intonations of which, however, are skilfully made the most of, come from so powerful a chest. Naumann is not destitute of a certain nobility of character, and one can feel a certain communicative emotion vibrating in his very real eloquence. Formerly a Protestant pastor, he specially applied himself to the study of the social problem, and in order to understand it better spent a few years in a manufactory as a simple workman. He was regarded before the war as an abstract theorist with his head in the clouds. His very elaborate speeches are distinguished indeed by imprecision of thought, although their form is always perfect.

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Who would have thought that this sociological visionary would one day transform himself into a practical and positive realist? Now, it was Naumann who, in the early months of the war, conceived that plan of a *Mitteleuropa* (Central Europe) which, even in the case of the defeat of Germany, would present enormous advantages for the Central Empires and would deprive the Allies of all the fruits of their victory.

The Popular Party, which was neighbourly with the Democrats of Eugen Richter, was a group of local interest. It was composed exclusively of Wurtembergers. Small in number, it had a certain influence in the Reichstag, thanks to the ability of its leaders, Payer and the brothers Haussmann. The latter, who were twins, resembled each other so much that we were always mixing them up. They had the same height, the same stoutness, the same face adorned by the same drooping moustache, the same shrill voice, the same tragic gestures. They professed the most advanced ideas. Their eloquence, a little too solemn and redundant, was not lacking in manner and corrosiveness.

Conrad Haussmann, now the only survivor, has gone over with arms and baggage to the Pan-German camp. Payer was to precede him in his concentration to the Right. This terrible little man, who, thanks to his incontestable oratorical skill, possessed great influence both in the Wurtemberg Parliament and at the Reichstag, was never able to get rid of his Swabian accent. That gave a special attraction to his speeches, the matter and form of which were nevertheless impeccable. From the day on which Payer, elected President of the Lower Chamber of his native place, was led to frequent the Court circles of Stuttgart, he gave points to Prussian Conservatives themselves in the expression of his imperialistic patriotism.

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How many of these ex-Socialists I have seen transform themselves since 1901! Nowhere better than in the Reichstag could one observe the progress of Pan-Germanism. In 1899 I heard almost the entire House indignantly protest against the annexationist theories of the National-Liberal Hasse. In 1911 the Left itself had adopted these theories, and, if it showed a certain reserve in defending them publicly, it did not support the Chancellor, who practically prepared their application, with less energy.

The first president of the Pan-Germanist League, Hasse, —a tall, stout man with a vulgar face enframed by a red beard,—was a visionary. He spoke with great volubility, in a thick voice, and with his eyes lost as in a dream. The most violent interruptions, the most offensive sarcasms and laughter, did not arrest the flow of his ecstatic eloquence. To him "Greater Germany" was a dogma, and he anathematised all heretics, Ministers and Deputies, who took upon themselves to contradict him. We Alsace-Lorrainers had no more redoubtable enemy in the Reichstag.

Bassermann was Hasse's most docile pupil. When I entered the Reichstag the head of the National-Liberal Party was still a somewhat unimportant personage. A little lawyer of Baden, with no great ability, he had had the good fortune to marry a very wealthy Jewess, which enabled him to devote himself entirely to public life. Few politicians have had to suffer so many insults as Bassermann. A wandering candidate, he has never succeeded in getting elected twice in succession in the same constituency. But never has he lost faith in his star.

Bassermann is a handsome man. Alas! he knows it and takes advantage of it. Too well-groomed, outrageously



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pomaded and perfumed, he struts about like a young god in the lobbies of the Reichstag, which do not seem broad enough for the graces which he complacently displays. One can guess, when he speaks to a colleague, that he imagines he is greatly honouring his interlocutor and is conscious of his magnanimity. Like the peacock, he spreads out his tail as soon as he is looked at. Everything in Bassermann indicates pride—his attitude, his gestures, and his affected speech.

Governmental without restriction, because he openly aspires to the highest posts, the leader of the National-Liberals was always the most assiduous guest at the Wilhelmstrasse Palace. All the Chancellors have counted him among their most zealous courtiers. When, in Parliament, questions of foreign policy arose and Bassermann unfolded his ever voluminous papers, the same disdainful reflection was made on all benches, "It's the Chancellor who is speaking." Everyone knew, indeed, that Bassermann's speech had been composed in the Government offices and that the highest official of the Empire was putting into the mouth of his voluntary colleague what he himself could not say. It would be very interesting, to-day, to examine all the pre-war speeches of this puppet, in order to discover in them the secret thought of the Imperial Government.

I have retained an amusing recollection of a short conversation I had with Bassermann the day after Prince von Bülow's fall. To appreciate it thoroughly, it is necessary to explain that this ambitious man had ever been one of the bitterest adversaries of the Catholic Centre.

One morning I happened to be alone in the writing-room when Bassermann entered.

"Good morning, Mr. Chancellor," said I.

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Bassermann, glancing rapidly around, made sure that we were alone. Then, with the most charming of smiles, he replied :

“Are you speaking to me ? Anyway, you can let your friends of the Centre know that if I become Chancellor I shall be in perfect agreement with them.”

Since the beginning of the war, Bassermann, who was one of its principal artisans, wore the uniform of an officer of the reserve, and it was especially in Belgium that, between two parliamentary sessions, he exercised his ability as an ultra-patriotic administrator.<sup>1</sup> Do not let us show the least surprise. All the foreign nationalities of the Empire always found in this man, who was as mediocre as he was vain, a determined adversary.

I knew at the Reichstag the Conservatives von Heydebrandt, Count Kanitz, and Kardorff. The first-named—quite a little man, thin and restless—has always exercised an enormous influence on the decisions of his party. He was laughingly called “the uncrowned King of Prussia,” and, in fact, he dictated his orders to the Chancellor.

The Prussian Conservative, the Junker, is in no way, as is imagined abroad, a supple politician, submissive and governmental by nature. The country gentry of the Elbe form a very exclusive caste, one whose rigid traditions will suffer no tutelage, even though royal. They have a State doctrine to which, amidst all changes in public life, they remain immovably faithful. As they get themselves paid for their fidelity to the throne by all sorts of privileges, and occupy all the avenues to power, they have forgotten obedience, and speak as masters in a State which has become their property.

<sup>1</sup> Bassermann died almost suddenly in July, 1917. He was sixty-two years of age.

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Ministerial posts, provincial governorships, lord-lieutenancies, and the High Command in the Army are theirs by right. When Miquel and Dernburg were appointed, one a Prussian Minister, the other a Secretary of State of the Empire, the elevation of these commoners to high posts reserved for the caste provoked an explosion of anger in Conservative circles. In the regiments of the Guard, as in certain cavalry regiments, all the officers belong to Junker families. Hence an effective power of which they often make an ill use.

The Conservatives can, if need be, be the fiercest of opponents in the Prussian Landtag and in the Reichstag. Chancellors fear them and almost always capitulate before their unreasonable demands. Prince von Bülow was their victim, whilst Bethmann-Hollweg was constantly obliged to buy their malevolent neutrality by concessions of principle. At the time of the Canal Affair, Junker officials were seen to throw themselves heart and soul into the anti-governmental agitation, and in this they were openly encouraged by a few friendly Ministers. The King of Prussia reigns; Herr von Heydebrandt governs.

This oligarchy has always prevented the great kingdom of the north from democratising its State institutions. How many times the advisers of the Prussian Crown have, during the last century and under pressure of events, promised reforms which the Junkers have always brought to nothing!

Between 1898 and 1905 the star of the Conservatives grew dim at the Reichstag. It was to assume all its brilliance during the years that followed, when all parties in Parliament, after the Algeciras Affair, saw that the Great War, desired by the Right and the military party, was certain to break out soon.



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Count Kanitz, one of the best collaborators of von Heydebrandt, spoke chiefly on agrarian questions. He was fiercely protectionist. This tall and emaciated man with sympathetic face possessed the temperament of an apostle and could retain the ear of the Reichstag; whilst his colleague Kardorff, of the party of Independent Conservatives, always provoked uproars when, in his tremulous voice, he attacked the Extreme Left. This ex-officer, in a duel with a student, von Ketteler (later one of the most celebrated bishops of Prussia), had lost his nose, and wore a silver one, the paint of which used often to peel off, which did not contribute to make his physiognomy agreeable. In his personal relations with his colleagues he was as amiably smiling as he was churlish in the tribune.

This contrast between the worldly courtesy and the political attitude of the Conservatives is one of the most disconcerting features not only for the foreigner, but also for the Germans themselves. Highly educated men, and polite sometimes to the point of obsequiousness, the Junkers cut a very good figure in international drawing-rooms, where alas! the most cordial welcome is reserved for them. That does not prevent them following, everywhere and always, with inflexible tenacity, their policy of universal domination, and from employing the most questionable means of triumphing. A Prussian Conservative will have no scruples in taking part in espionage, and of course under cover of his family and friendly relations. Prussia dominating the world and his caste dominating Prussia—that is his constant and almost sole aim.

I was on the best personal terms with the members of the Right, who, however, every time an Alsace-Lorraine speaker rose in the Reichstag, interrupted his speech with churlish and preposterous exclamations. I chiefly came

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into contact with Oertel, that simple journalist who, through his ability as writer and speaker, made a select position for himself in the ranks of the Junkers. Oertel was the type of the jovial politician and good fellow. Unconscionably stout, he still further exaggerated, through dilettantism, the enormous prominence of his stomach by wearing a white waistcoat. When in the tribune he disarmed his adversaries by a running fire of often very successful jokes. He also wrote subtle, spirited and passionate articles which delighted the Right. In his private conversation he became the sceptical politician, who, in the political comedy, found more reasons for smiling than motives for getting angry. Intercourse with him was all the more agreeable as he was thoroughly acquainted with all the petty scandal of the Reichstag, and he detailed it, apparently without malice and with many an indulgent smile, before those who had the good luck to inspire confidence and friendship in him. His political friends were not safe from his practical jokes.

In 1898 the Catholic Centre had an exceptional position in the Reichstag. According as it gave the weight of its ninety-eight votes to the Left or the Right, it displaced majorities as it liked. Its managing committee, of which Lieber was the prime mover, even pleaded this pretext as an excuse for its evolution towards governmentalism. Can a party which bears such heavy responsibilities as regards the Empire isolate itself with the extreme opposition? Moreover, was it not necessary to repair the ruins of the "*Kulturkampf*"? And was not the best means of doing that to get paid for the services rendered the Chancellor by particular concessions?

Lieber, who, with his colleague Spahn, was the initiator of this policy of abdication, was a lawyer by profession.

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Slim and small-statured, the possessor of a long, flowing beard, and affected in manner, he was not lacking in ability, though he wrongly imagined he had the qualities of a great diplomatist. He spoke with closed eyes, without a gesture, putting his interminable phrases, in that non-sensical language at which the Germans themselves scoff by calling it *Professorendeutsch* (professorial German), into the most precise order. His evident anxiety was to bring himself into prominence before he tried to convince his adversaries.

At first, the leader of the Centre tried to treat the representatives of Alsace-Lorraine with a certain disdain. But when he encountered an unexpected resistance on our part he showed greater suppleness and was more accessible. Still, we had some difficulty as long as he held a preponderant position in the Reichstag in getting our propositions regarding the abolition of the dictatorship discussed. Lieber, in agreement with the Chancellor, always found an empty pretext for adjourning a debate which would have forced his group to censure the Government.

Spahn seconded him in these attempts to stifle our demands. Poor Spahn! An ambitious magistrate, given to cringing and begging, he was governmental by temperament. Bad luck led him to join an opposition party and he could never get over it. When this tall man of insignificant appearance was obliged to contradict the Chancellor or his collaborators, there were always tears in his shrill voice. His prudent words and roundabout phrases revealed his great embarrassment. His friends called him skilful, but I always considered he was chiefly timid—nay, more, a coward.

Spahn's top hat was the subject of constant jokes in the



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Reichstag. As soon as the vice-president of the Centre put it on, it was known that he had been or was about to go to the Wilhelmstrasse, to propose to the Chancellor one of those compromises which German parliamentarians called, in their far from elegant language, a *Kuhhandel*—a cow-bargain. The sacrifice of principles in exchange for personal advantages or concessions favourable to the party—it was in such profitable but far from honourable operations as that that Spahn employed all his modest ability. The independents of the Centre (and at the close of the last century they were still numerous) were furious at what they considered were acts of treason, but the impenitent negotiator always ended, by using threats and supplications, in dominating them.

Spahn was afflicted by a son who was destined to cause him the greatest trouble. Martin was intended for a professorial career, and aspired to a chair in history at a university. Outrageously ambitious, he had long sought his way. He first of all exhausted himself in mediocre publications, in which, in an inflated style, without either order or method, he lavished his second-hand erudition.

Not wishing to offend anyone, this ludicrous fellow spent his time in hypocritically commenting on his former writings, in order to reply to justified criticisms. If need be, he affirmed with the utmost effrontery that the phrases with which he was confronted signified the opposite of what had been read in them. A lie in human form, Martin Spahn always deceived his friends and foes alike.

Now, because he called himself a Catholic, whilst sacrificing all his beliefs to his ambition, and because, on the other hand, his books had nothing original in them save their intentional vagueness, the young historian could not

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succeed in obtaining the title of professor. No university would have anything to do with him.

One fine morning, the vice-president of the Centre put on his best frock-coat and top hat and went to call upon Prince von Bülow, who, as though by chance, needed the support of the Centre in an important question. When Spahn left the Chancellor's office his face was wreathed in smiles. A few days later an Imperial decree officially appointed Martin Spahn Professor of History at the University of Strassburg. This intervention of the Sovereign was contrary to all tradition, since no professor can be received in a German university without the consent of his future colleagues. Throughout the whole of intellectual Germany there was a formidable rising in arms against the Chancellor and his inspirer. Personal at first, the discussion soon became theoretical. The *Voraussetzungslosigkeit*—freedom from prejudice—of the *savants* caused torrents of ink and saliva to flow. "Martin Spahn had been appointed to Strassburg because he was a Catholic. Science had no knowledge and must not have any knowledge of these irrelevant considerations," repeated all the members of the universities and their friends in chorus. The debate became so envenomed that the Chancellor was momentarily threatened with a crisis.

Martin Spahn and his father allowed the storm to subside. The former, installed in his chair, hastened, moreover, to give pledges to his opponents by publishing pamphlets on the subject of official instruction and on Pope Leo XIII, which created a scandal in the Catholic world. The odious fellow began his double game again in order to assure the favours of all parties. At the same time he inaugurated in Alsace that hypocritical and cunning policy which made him the plague of the Nationalists. Never did an intriguer

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of low degree place at the service of the narrowest Germanism such knavery and so great a lack of scruples. Constantly treated with scorn, the ignoble personage immediately resumed his underhand work in the hope of succeeding even then in imposing himself on our political organisations.

In 1906 he found a German constituency willing to offer him a seat. But hardly had he been elected to the Reichstag than he was excluded from the group of the Centre, of which his father was vice-president. Once more he tried, by means of denials and platitudes, to force the door closed against him. But he succeeded no better than he had done in Alsace-Lorraine in playing the important political part he had dreamed of.

Spahn senior had a colleague at the Reichstag who later became his unfortunate competitor for the presidency of the Centre, Baron von Hertling, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Munich. Another ambitious man, but how much more intelligent, more subtle, and more skilful than he. Hertling succeeded somewhat late in attaining an important position, since for the past six years he has been Prime Minister in Bavaria. This little man, who is an admirable speaker, had succeeded, at the time he belonged to the Opposition, in getting himself entrusted with several diplomatic missions to the Vatican. In Rome he was held in great esteem, although he always placed his German patriotism before his religious convictions. He it was who, in the last year of the pontificate of Leo XIII, obtained from the Pope, weakened by age and illness, the establishment at Strassburg of that Catholic theological faculty which was chiefly to serve the purpose of Germanising our young clergy.

Hertling's speeches were always much appreciated in





[London Electrotpe Agency.

BARON VON HERTLING.

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the Reichstag. Their academic form, however, badly concealed the lack of courage of an orator who chiefly sought to spare the Government. With Lieber and Spahn, Hertling was one of the principal artisans of the rally of the Centre to Pan-Germanism.<sup>1</sup> These three pontiffs of the intermediary period were to prepare the way for Erzberger.

Groeber was and has remained the type of the honest man. A judge in Wurtemberg, he was very young when he entered parliamentary life, of which he is now the veteran. There is a striking contrast between his huge width of back and the almost childish *naïveté* of his mind. Though of superior intelligence and inflexible character, good old Groeber has never understood anything of the intrigues of which he was the victim, and of which he has become the unconscious accomplice. Spahn and Hertling have employed him on the most suspicious business. With the most perfect good faith, he has followed where it pleased them to lead him. He has served as a screen for the over-skilful leaders of the Centre. His great conscientiousness disguised their questionable enterprises. I always had a feeling of embarrassment and pity when I heard Groeber, in his strong bass voice, uphold the crafty policy of his friends. He put such conviction and spirit into it.

Many a time have I walked with the Wurtemberg parliamentarian along the alleys of the Thiergarten. He was grieved by the persecutions inflicted upon us and found severe words to condemn them. And yet, as soon as the diplomatists of his party had turned him round, he condemned with equal sincerity from the tribune our spirit of opposition.

<sup>1</sup> Baron von Hertling has just succeeded Herr Michaelis as Chancellor of the Empire.



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Groeber never consented to marriage. He frequented the religious services assiduously, and the appearance of this tall bearded man edified all the faithful. For a long time an ultra-particularist, he passed, after 1911, into the army of the ultra-patriots.

I knew another turncoat who expended less time and reflection in abjuring his brilliant past. The Abbé Schaedler, a Bavarian, who had the face and to a certain extent the ability of Mirabeau, had made a brilliant *début* in his country as a speaker at public meetings. In those days Prussia had no more redoubtable adversary. He came several times to Alsace-Lorraine on lecturing tours, which had a great success, because this German could say in almost revolutionary language what we could express only in prudent and measured terms.

Schaedler entered the Reichstag when very young. There he immediately attained considerable influence in his party. How great was my surprise when I saw the fierce demagogue transform himself progressively into a downright supporter of the Government! Backbiters alleged that Schaedler, who meanwhile had obtained an important canonry, had dreams of placing a mitre on his head. But he died before obtaining this reward for his abdication, which was none the less complete.

What disillusionings of the same kind we Deputies for Alsace-Lorraine registered during the years preceding the war! Hitze, Heim, Gerstenberger—so many members of the Centre, who formerly seemed to have the highest comprehension and keenest sympathy for our claims,—so many politicians, either weak or crafty, who were to betray us!

I fear to weary the reader by broadly sketching these portraits of German politicians. Nevertheless, it seems to

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me that nothing can better enable us to understand the transformation which the imperialism of Prince von Bülow and his successor had brought about in the mentality of parliamentarians of all parties. People abroad were unable to follow that rapid evolution. Thence arose the stupid confidence in which the rivals of the Empire lived. In France they had still faith in the democracy of Richter, in the socialism of old Liebknecht, and in the strong opposition of Windhorst, whereas Müller-Meiningen, Frank, and Spahn had completely overthrown the traditions of the national representation of Germany.

However that may be, in spite of certain individual failings, the Reichstag of 1898 was, as regards the Centre and the Left, that is to say the majority, relatively Liberal. Was it particularist in the same measure? Yes, but the groups which watched jealously over the autonomy of the States did so for different reasons.

In fact the Prussian Conservatives, in some other ways downright reactionaries, were above all anxious to preserve the great kingdom of the north from the contagion of southern democracy. They hoped, doubtless, that the Prussian hegemony would daily spread more and more over the States, but they feared that, as a result, the broader and more popular institutions of the small kingdoms would exercise an irresistible attraction over the middle classes and the people of their country. They protested, therefore, with the greatest energy against the attempts made by the Reichstag to take part in the retrograde policy of Prussia. One was always certain of their help when one sought to limit the competence of the Empire. In conjunction with the Centre and the Democrats, the Conservatives formed therefore a particularist coalition in which the autonomy of the States benefited

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until the time when the adoption by all parties of the pan-German programme swept away all the old combinations.

On the other hand, the National-Liberals made no mystery of their centralising tendencies, and the group of the Extreme Left seconded them vigorously in that campaign.

The Socialists, especially at the time when they still believed in the drawing near of the "great evening," strove by every means in their power to destroy the federal character of the Empire.

Bebel one day, in one of his fits of brutal frankness, made the following declaration to me :

"It was easy for you others, Frenchmen, to bring about your revolution. You had only one head to cut off. With us we should be obliged to cut off twenty-five."

Nothing is truer. In the southern States the dynasties are very popular. The King of Bavaria, for instance, who walks about alone in the streets of Munich and converses familiarly with the most humble passers-by, has nothing to fear from the personal hostility of his subjects. Moreover, as in the neighbouring States (Wurtemberg, Grand Duchy of Baden, Hesse), the Bavarian Lower Chamber is elected by universal and secret suffrage. The southerners are unacquainted with the *régime* of privileged castes. There is therefore no reason for, and no possibility of, the party of the Extreme Left springing upon these countries a revolution, which, on the other hand, would be perfectly justified in Prussia and in Saxony.

It resulted from this, that at the time when the Socialists were still frankly Republican they must have wished to unify Germany, that is to say first of all to limit and then to suppress the autonomy of the States, in order to succeed more easily and at a single stroke in changing the form of



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the central government. It was necessary to place all the German crowns on a single head, to use Bebel's image, in order to be able to make them fall together by a single blow of the axe.

It is needless to add that the Socialists of to-day have abandoned these intransigent tactics. Since Frank was received at the Court of the Grand Duke of Baden and the Bavarian companions voted the private budget of the kingdom, the Unitarists formed but a group without influence in the Reichstag.

## CHAPTER IV

### PEN PORTRAITS OF PARLIAMENTARIANS

The Three Great Leaders of Doctrinal Socialism—Figures in the Second Rank—The Polish Group—Müller-Fulda—Comrades—Parliamentary Barriers—Count von Ballestrem—Official Fêtes.

THE forty members of the Extreme Left whom I found at Berlin in 1898 were still by an overwhelming majority revolutionaries. Bebel was then at the height of his ability. An ex-joiner, the most brilliant leader of Germanic Socialism had, by assiduous work, acquired a varied knowledge, and as, moreover, he possessed all the natural gifts of an orator, he exercised a veritable dictatorship over his party. The faithful guardian of the Marxist doctrine, practically all the articles of which he sacrificed later, on becoming rich and eccentric, he overwhelmed with his anathemas all those who dared to contradict him. At that time Bernstein, already a Possibilist, passed for a heretic and was treated with the utmost severity at the party congresses.

Bebel was a small-statured man, thin, sinewy, and with a leonine face. He appeared to be in a state of perpetual ebullition. His passionate speech and cutting gestures still further accentuated the perpetually aggressive character of his appearance. Standing in the tribune with

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outstretched arm and his threatening finger prolonged by the pencil which he always held in his hand, he delivered against middle-class society speeches as interminable as they were passionate, and, although his shrill voice was in no way agreeable, he put such vigour into what he was saying that he was always listened to with sustained interest.

Quite different was Liebknecht senior, the father of the Deputy who has been so much talked about since the beginning of the war. A former student of Protestant theology, he had retained a modest attitude, a mild voice, and unctuous gestures. The contrast between the violence of his remarks and the almost bland voice in which he uttered them was striking. He was indeed the patriarch blessing a doctrine of which Bebel was determined to remain the demagogue.

At that time we occupied, with the Poles, in the gallery of the Extreme Left, the seats placed above those of the Socialists. Liebknecht, who had taken a liking to me, used often to come and have a conversation. He had the temperament of an apostle. I have retained an excellent recollection of our always courteous discussions.

I will record but two characteristic phrases of the old Socialist.

“I have lost all religious faith; but if I became a believer again, I should go the whole hog and become a Catholic.”

“Here, in the Reichstag, there are but two classes of members who are sincerely sympathetic towards and active on behalf of the working-classes: the Socialists and the priests.”

Singer, the third leader of the group of the Extreme Left, was quite a different man. This stout personage,



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with coarse, vulgar features and thick voice, was chiefly distinguished for his smiling scepticism. An ex-manufacturer, to whom some people—doubtless wrongly—ascribed savage behaviour towards his young work-girls, he had joined somewhat late a party which knew how to profit largely, if not by his eloquence, at least by his marvellous ability as an organiser.

As president of the group, the diplomatist Singer calmed all storms, and always found formulas for compromises between Doctrinaires and Revisionists. One never knew to which side his preference leaned. Perhaps he himself did not know. None the less, by that very fact he rendered signal services to his party, in which rivalries were so numerous and discussions so bitter.

In private intercourse Singer was very agreeable. There was no trace in him of the fiery polemist whose conversation always retains an aggressive note. He it was who, every time negotiations with the other leaders of the group were necessary, undertook that delicate task. Singer, who was a Jew, had a very pronounced Semitic face.

Bernstein, also a Jew, was more delicate in appearance and in nature. His accentuated but very delicate features, his little, malicious eyes and studied speech advantageously distinguished him from the vulgar agitators who encumbered his party. He often related to me the vicissitudes of his adventurous life, his condemnations and long exile, in the course of which he spent several months at the house of an honest Italian priest. From his obligatory travels abroad he had returned a polyglot and a Possibilist. In 1898 his colleagues regarded him with suspicion on account of his moderate opinions. At each congress of the party the ultras demanded his expulsion. To-day

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Bernstein is considered to be one of the most dangerous revolutionaries of German Socialism. He has, however, changed nothing, neither in his programme nor in his tactics, which were always the same. Nothing can inform us better regarding the complete evolution of the Parliamentary group of the Extreme Left.

To complete my little portrait gallery, I shall say a few more words about three men who at that time played an important part in the Reichstag: Rickert, Stoecker, and Arendt.

The first named—"Handsome Henry" as he was called in the lobbies—had long vied with Eugen Richter for the leadership of the Democratic Party. Not having succeeded in eliminating his rival, he broke away from him with ten of his colleagues, who formed a new group that was almost as governmental as the National Liberals. Little attention was paid to the speeches of this vain but characterless man.

Stoecker, the former Court preacher, had a more accentuated physiognomy. Very particular about his personal appearance and an admirable speaker, the chief of the anti-Semitic group was one of the most attentively listened to of the orators of the Reichstag. An amiable colleague, he had many personal friends in the Reichstag, not only in the Conservative groups, with which he lived on neighbourly terms, but also in the other parliamentary groups. I have had many political and religious discussions with him. He excelled in them, both on account of the wealth of his knowledge and because of the pleasing courtesy of his argumentation. Stoecker was, however, an almost ferocious Imperialist and had sworn against the Jews a hatred of disconcerting intensity.

On this subject, I would point out that the anti-Semitism

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of the Prussian Conservatives knew no compromise. In the eyes of the Junker, the Jew is and remains the most redoubtable enemy. I have always been struck by the extreme violence of these religious prejudices. The Socialist Party was the only one which counted Jews among its members.

Although only recently converted to Christianity, the joyous Arendt had, however, succeeded in entering the group of the Independent Conservatives, of which he was one of the most fluent speakers. This man, who had the appearance of a tobacco jar perched on two match-stalks and surmounted by a deformed lemon, had a speciality. A convinced bimetallist, he treated us every year to two or three interminable speeches, in order to convince us of the necessity of reclassing silver among the metals with invariable conventional value.

Arendt, who was constantly the target for the gibes of the parties of the Left, provoked these retorts by his impudently aggressive eloquence. The unfortunate man had formerly had a strange misadventure. After having married a bad-dispositioned dressmaker, he decided to divorce her. Now, the day after the judgment, his wife stood at the members' exit and distributed to them little business cards bearing the words, "Mme. Arendt recommends her dressmaking establishment to the wives of her husband's colleagues." Fortunately for the Conservative member, ridicule does not yet kill in Germany.

The Polish members were our neighbours in 1898. They continued to be when, after the formidable increase in the number of Socialist seats, they made us emigrate, whilst still reserving for us "the topmost benches," next to the Extreme Right. They were all gentlemen and agreeable in intercourse, but how unstable and unreliable!



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I have seen them pass from the most revolutionary opposition to the most tangled governmentalism, and that from one moment to another, without apparent motive. One day they would threaten to place bombs under the Chancellor's chair ; the next they would enthusiastically vote in favour of reactionary laws. The prelate Jadzewski, one of their most respected leaders, was constantly exhibiting these disconcerting changes of humour. One could never absolutely count on the assistance of these inconstant fellows. My friend Count Bratowo-Mielzienski, who since then was the central figure in a celebrated trial, after having surprised his wife in criminal conversation with one of his nephews and killed the guilty couple with gunshots, was quite as changeable. Sometimes he complacently related that the Emperor formerly called him "his little grenadier." Then he would display the most anti-dynastic feelings. One day he confided to me that, having been received in a military club in the South of France, he had boxed the ears of an officer who was making pacifist remarks. Now I learn that, though relieved from military service on account of his age, he voluntarily enlisted at the beginning of the war in order to fight against the Allies whom he pretended he loved so much.

Another and more painful surprise was reserved for me. The president of the Polish group, Prince Radziwill, was by far the most respectable figure in the Imperial Parliament. When this fine old man mounted the tribune to speak of the misfortunes of his country it seemed as though the whole of martyred Poland was weeping in his touching words. Even the Right respected a sorrow so nobly expressed. Alas ! we have recently learnt from the newspapers that Prince Radziwill has consented to become

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the Prime Minister of the new Kingdom of Poland, and that he has expressed his deepest gratitude to persecuting Prussia for the creation of this phantom State.

Clearly, that ought not to prevent us from continuing to show all our sympathy towards a nation that has suffered so much and so long. But how long a time it will take the Poles, at least the governing classes, to recover themselves, to think and to act logically and in a manly way !

Yet the Prussian Government always reserved its bitterest hatred for the natives of the " Eastern Marches." It would take too long to recall here the odious measures of which the Poles were the victims : the 700 million marks which the Landtag voted for the " colonisation " of Posen by German peasants, the interdiction to use the Polish language in the schools and for correspondence, the forbidding of Poles to construct houses on their lands, and, finally, dispossession. It was Prince von Bülow, that so-called gentleman, whose apparent courtesy ill conceals his savage chauvinism, who, despite the opposition of Prussian Conservatives, had voted by Parliament that Bill of dispossession for national suspicion which represents the most abominable wrong against the rights of property in modern times.

The fourth Chancellor of the Empire—we cannot too often repeat the fact—was, of all German statesmen, the one who, from the national point of view, showed the least scruple. Has he not cynically confessed in his *Memoirs* that he knew how to make use of the martyrdom of Poland to attach, by bonds of complicity, Muscovite Tsarism to German Imperialism ?

" It is precisely these Polish affairs," he writes, " which have often united Prussia and Russia. In the Polish

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danger there is a warning to the two Empires not to fall out, but to regard their common defence against the ambitious aspirations of the Poles as a bridge on which Prussia and Russia can always meet."

Prussian duplicity in its entirety is revealed in these phrases, written but a few months before the war. And to think that Prince Radziwill and his colleagues in the Reichstag had read Prince von Bülow's declarations when they made their last and most surprising evolution !

How right Korfantry was not to wish to be confounded with these puppets ! The young Polish Deputy (he belonged to the Reichstag during only two legislatures) passed for a revolutionary. This tall, fair young man with ungainly carriage and sonorous voice was, however, very moderate in his opinions. On the other hand, he knew nothing of Jadzewski's clever bargainings and contradictory attitudes, and he expressed his surprise and disgust at them in stinging terms. Thence his troubles. He was wrongly accused of being sympathetic towards Socialism. He was simply defending the interests of a nation with whose sufferings he was acquainted against the weakness of a nobility whose egoism shocked him.

I have yet to speak of a man who, although his name has rarely appeared in the newspapers, was one of the prime movers of the Imperial Parliament—Müller-Fulda, a member of the Centre. This tall, skinny fellow, with sparse beard and mocking eye, had the appearance of a faun. The son of a small manufacturer, he went abroad when fifteen years of age to study the manufacturing processes and commercial methods of the English and French. When quite young, he then became the manager of a carpet factory and rapidly grew rich. When the electors of Fulda sent him to the Reichstag they made a



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particularly happy choice, for Müller was an accomplished man of business.

Politics interested him, however, only as a puppet-show. Like a child, he amused himself in the lobbies with combinations, which he endeavoured to complicate for the simple pleasure of doing so. Only economic questions retained his attention. For the others he had nothing save mischievous smiles.

On my arrival in Berlin, I had put up at the Central Hotel. Müller-Fulda had also made it his headquarters. He took upon himself to see to my Parliamentary education. I took my breakfast with him every morning; then, together, we proceeded to the Reichstag, where we were generally the first to enter the writing-room. He applied himself to shattering my last illusions regarding the German Parliamentary *régime*.

"Above all," he said to me, "attach no importance to the noisy declarations and tragic gestures of speakers on the occasion of the first reading of a Bill. All the work of the Reichstag is done behind the scenes. Our party leaders are augurs who have learnt to look at each other in public assembly without laughing; but, surrounded by the mystery of their private confabs, they are hand and glove together. I know it because I'm one of them. Everything is compromise with us. We set up a noisy opposition only to obtain privileges. The Chancellor plays upon his winnings with parties which are quarrelling over his favours, and with leaders who are always ready to sell themselves. If you are wise, you Alsace-Lorrainers, you will obtain everything you want. Be awkward in public, but know how to fix a price afterwards for your assistance. And, above all, don't be simpletons. The Reichstag is composed of three dozen skilful and clever

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men and three hundred and fifty idiots, who are indifferent to the progress of business. Our leaders endeavour to surround themselves only with mediocrities, in order to be sure of having no rivals. The fewer members there are in Berlin, the happier they are, since that enables them to devote themselves to their little manœuvres far from all control. All are in continuous relations with the Wilhelmstrasse, which knows their ambitions and how to play with them skilfully. People abroad believe that we possess a national representation. But we have only a handful of operetta conspirators, whom an enlightened stage-manager directs as he thinks fit. With us, such big words as ministerial responsibility, liberty, and democracy have no meaning. Heydebrandt fiercely mounts guard over Conservative privileges. Bassermann and Spahn envy him and would have their share of the cake. Richter and Bebel are listened to ; but nobody, not even the simple soldiers of their party, follows them when they try to provoke reaction in the masses, and they are too intelligent not to see it. We are a nation of valets and slaves, whose mind has been prepared for all forms of servitude by intellectuals, domesticated and above all greedy for honours and distinctions. Everything is foolish verbosity in our Parliamentary struggles. Don't listen to speeches, which will make you believe there is a conscious and determined opposition. Rather observe the secret meetings of the party leaders among themselves and with the collaborators of the Chancellor. It's there that the practical work is done."

Müller-Fulda was right. After having freely insulted each other from the tribune, Heydebrandt, Bassermann, Spahn, Hertling, and all the other holders of leading parts in Parliament assembled in the committee-rooms, or

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walked in friendly intercourse about the lobbies, and from these long and mysterious conversations there almost always sprang compromises in which the Chancellor had collaborated. The three readings of an important Bill always gave us the same chromatic scale. First reading : furious declarations and the solemn announcement of an opposition that nothing would shatter. Second reading : a scattered retreat on a barely modified text, but with a few noisy counter-attacks. Third reading : a perfect understanding, general embracings, reciprocal congratulations, and unanimous applause.

Here is one of a hundred examples. When William II determined to devote himself heart and soul to world-politics (it was in 1901) it was decided to double the navy. This plan of remodelling the fleet, which was to be terminated in 1916, included the creation of a squadron of big ironclads, in addition to six guardships and complementary units.

When the Bill appeared, there was a tremendous uproar in the whole of the Press of the Centre and Left. They were about to fall out with England, definitely compromise the finances of the Empire, weaken the army, and increase the load of taxation. The English, moreover, would never permit Germany to recover the formidable advance they had made and which they would be mad not to wish to maintain. And the refrain of all these articles, in which the opponents developed their arguments with extraordinary violence, was always the same, "Not a pfennig for this wild enterprise."

Müller-Fulda was as amused as a little madcap over all this incendiary literature, and still more so when he saw me devote serious attention to it. One morning, whilst we were having our coffee together, he confided in me as follows :



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“My poor Wetterlé, you are really too simple. All this is but a sudden blaze. From this very moment the Chancellor is sure of obtaining all he wants, and even more. The compromise has been accepted by all the *bourgeois* groups. Tirpitz is sacrificing the guardships, of which he has no need, and which he only put down on his programme in order to have the air of making a concession to the Opposition. As to the squadron of ironclads, the complementary ships, and the replacing of out-of-date boats by more modern and more powerful units, they will grant him them by an overwhelming majority. A formal promise has been given him by the party leaders.”

This time I thought that Müller-Fulda was making fun of me. With such a devil of a man you never knew where you were. And, indeed, it looked, at first, as though my distrust was justified, for during several weeks the deafening uproar continued in the Press, and, at the time of the first reading of the Bill, the speakers of the Centre and the Left seemed to wish to increase it still further by their fiery declarations.

The second act of the comedy, the scenario of which Müller had complacently related to me beforehand, took place at a secret meeting of the Budget Committee. All Parliamentary representatives may attend these secret meetings. The chairman confines himself to recalling the fact that they are placed on their honour to reveal nothing of what they hear to the newspapers. There was, therefore, a crowd in the committee-room. I was there. The discussion was at first harsh and violent. Admiral Tirpitz vigorously defended his plan; but they hardly listened to his technical developments. All eyes were fixed on Prince von Bülow, then Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, who seemed to bear on his broad

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shoulders the weight of an overwhelming secret. The proceedings had dragged out for two hours when Prince von Bülow asked to speak. His speech was very short. Delivered in a low, eager voice, with intentional slowness and restrained emotion, it may be summed up in these few words :

“ Take care !—the whole future of the Empire is at stake. The confession is hard to make, but it must be made, in order to overcome your thoughtless resistance. War with England is not only a possibility, it is probable . . . and near. Is it your desire, in the face of this urgent danger, that we should be completely disarmed ? ”

Dead silence followed these declarations of the prudent diplomatist. The Committee broke up. Anxiety could be read on every face. During the plenary sitting, the members, forming little animated groups, discussed with bated breath, in the lobbies, the terrible declarations of Prince von Bülow. A large number of naval officers were, as though by chance, in the large outer hall. These were buttonholed and questioned regarding the danger of British aggression, whereupon they complacently drew wild comparisons between the two navies.<sup>1</sup>

The next day the tone of the newspapers had completely changed. Almost without transition, the Press of the Centre and the Left admitted the necessity for increasing the fighting units, and concentrated its rearguard cannonade on the unfortunate guardships, which Tirpitz did not want for the time being, because the naval yards could not have built them at the same time as the squadron of big iron-clads.

<sup>1</sup> Large charts indicating the comparative strengths of all the navies of the world were hung at this time in the lobbies of the Reichstag. They were signed : WILHELM I.h.

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"Well," said Müller-Fulda to me, after glancing through the morning papers, "will you believe me another time when I tell you that everything is trickery and deceit in our parliamentary life?"

The Bill, indeed, was passed by an overwhelming majority at its second and third readings. Tirpitz shed a crocodile tear over the six boats refused him—and the trick was played. As to the German people, it had been unable to make out a thing. Once more its "representatives" had grossly deceived it.

Ought we to be surprised at this? No; because the atmosphere of the old Reichstag was naturally debilitating. As I have said above, barely sixty representatives regularly attended the sittings. Among these initiates, who belonged to the big committees, bonds of great intimacy had of inevitable necessity been established. In the eyes of these conspirators, the people no longer existed. All their cerebral activity was used up in the game of inter-fractional combinations. Once they had crossed the threshold of their palace, they thought only of their petty rivalries and ambitions. Collaboration with the Chancellor and his Secretaries of State became a sort of friendly game at chess at a private club. They settled their accounts among themselves, without troubling their heads over what the great public might think. Besides, did this public exist? Had it an opinion of its own? Could they not always, by the skilful use of a Press which blindly accepted their orders, lead it to burn to-day what it had worshipped yesterday?

In all Parliaments personal relations among members sometimes produce strange reconciliations. At Berlin these were the rule, at least among party leaders. The pride that a little official, like Müller-Meiningen, feels in



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being able to chat familiarly with the Chancellor and the leading officials of the Empire, the vanity that a Spahn, of middle-class origin, experiences on being treated as a friend by the least approachable of the Junker caste, the fear of conflicts which in the past always ended to the advantage of the Government, are so many factors which do not count in democratic countries, but which in the Reichstag provoke the worst weaknesses.

The small fry among the representatives—those who were fated merely to line the walls—do not enjoy the same privileges as the chairmen and members of the committees of the Parliamentary fractions. They never have the honour of speaking either to the members of the Government or to those of the Federal Council. They are penned up as insignificant. I shall always recollect with pleasure the stupefaction of these poor sheepish beings and the indignation of their shepherds when, during a plenary sitting, I mounted to the podium, where the Chancellor and his collaborators were, to converse with them about a current topic. My audacity seemed scandalous to them.

When I first entered the Reichstag, one of the leaders of the Centre thought fit to make me acquainted with the traditions of the House. "You must have personal relations," he said, "only with your political friends. Only the party leaders negotiate with the Government and the members of the other groups."

I respectfully pointed out to Herr Groeber (for it was he who gave me that strange advice) that, as I belonged to no fraction, I intended to retain my entire liberty, and that I was determined to make what use of it I pleased. And, indeed, during the sixteen years I was in the Reichstag, I frequented indifferently my colleagues of all parties, to the great indignation of the members of the Centre,

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who thought they had the right to control the Alsace-Lorraine representatives, because, in religious and social questions, our votes generally counted with theirs.

There are barriers between the Parliamentary groups which the party leaders can alone surmount. For instance, in the Reichstag restaurant each party has its regularly appointed table. The Conservatives and the members of the Government even occupy a special room, which custom forbade us to enter. The table reserved for the representatives of Alsace-Lorraine and the Poles was between that of the National-Liberals and that of the Centre. It was called the corner of "the enemies of the Empire." Sometimes a member of the Centre invited us to sit near him, but that was always exceptional. I had thus the honour, on several occasions, of lunching with Count von Ballestrem, who at that time was President of the Reichstag.

A wealthy mine-owner, belonging to the old Silesian nobility, Count von Ballestrem was an amiable man, possessed of great skill. Every time the proceedings became stormy he knew how to tranquillise the members' passions by a cordial or witty intervention. He was not appreciated at his just value until replaced by Count von Stollberg-Wernigerode and later by the Democrat Kaempf, who were both powerless to master the assembly.

Count von Ballestrem showed great ability in the use of smiling irony. In his personal relations with his colleagues he gave proof of the most friendly simplicity. One day I was violently attacked from the tribune by a Conservative. Now, as the cycle of speakers was closed, it was impossible for me to reply to my contradictor, so I went and complained to Count von Ballestrem. He said to me :

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"Ask permission to speak, in order to make a personal remark. Carefully prepare your reply, which must be short. You must deliver it very quickly and in an undertone. I shall lend an ear to what you are saying, but shall not hear you until your rectification is sufficiently comprehensible. I shall then point out that you are overstepping the limits of a personal explanation and shall withdraw your right of speech."

Which was done.

The President of the Reichstag had taken part in the 1870 campaign as a captain on the Staff. He liked to relate how, every time it was possible, he had tried to diminish the sufferings of the populations of the invaded countries.

Very jealous of the rare privileges of the Reichstag, he never failed to intervene when the officials violated them. On the occasion of the fêtes given in honour of the coming-of-age of the Crown Prince, it was decided that our cards as representatives should serve as permits to pass all barriers established by the police. Wishing to cross the Linden, which was forbidden to the crowd, I was nevertheless stopped near the Brandenburg Gate by an officer. It was necessary for me to make a detour, in order to find a more obliging member of the police. The next day I mentioned this incident to Count von Ballestrem. He insisted on having the police officer who had shown lack of respect to a Parliamentary representative punished, and he succeeded in doing so.

On the other hand, the President of the Reichstag was very attached to out-of-date formulas, which on one occasion served him a bad turn. In an address to the Emperor he so far forgot himself one day as to use the words "*Ich ersterbe zu Füßen Euerer Majestät*" ("I



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expire at Your Majesty's feet "). The journals of the Left protested most violently against this servile phrase, whilst the satirical organs covered it with ridicule.

He was, however, a Monarchist of the old school, and though, as the master of numerous Polish workmen, he possessed a certain comprehension of the complaints of the oppressed nationalities, he was ever trying to win us over to the cause of the Empire. Although tall and rather massive, he was not lacking in distinction, and he never departed from the most prepossessing politeness, even when the natural impetuosity of his temperament led him into fiery discussions. Since Simons, the Reichstag had never known so remarkable a President.

I have just spoken of the fêtes on the coming-of-age of the Crown Prince. Several Sovereigns were expected in Berlin on that occasion. I went to the Anhalt railway station to witness the arrival of the Emperor of Austria. I had been told that the sight would be interesting. There were twenty of us on the steps when Francis Joseph's special train arrived. After the two Sovereigns had embraced several times, they passed the guard of honour in review. Now, each of the sections of this guard was commanded by one of the young brothers of the Prince Imperial. All the men of the guard were giants. When the time came for them to march past, I witnessed the most grotesque scene I have ever contemplated in my life. The princes, each placed in front of one of the sections, raised their stiffened legs to the height of their chins in order to maintain the regulation distance between their men and themselves. The two Emperors, on seeing the poor lads, and especially the ten-year-old Prince Oscar, execute a review step so utterly ridiculous, laughed until the tears rolled down their cheeks.

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Alas ! Francis Joseph no longer laughed a few moments later when the carriages crossed at a trot the Königgrätzerstrasse, that is to say the street the insolent name of which recalled his bloody defeat of 1866 and the savage spoliation which followed. A few Berlin newspapers were vaguely conscious of the lack of tact of which the Prussian Government was guilty towards the aged Emperor, and proposed that the name of the avenue be changed ; but the Pan-Germans, already very powerful at that time, were passionately opposed to it.

## CHAPTER V

### FOREIGN POLITICS

#### Premonitions of War—Finlanders and Alsace-Lorrainers.

A FACT that always struck me in the Reichstag was the profound ignorance of my colleagues—even the most intelligent—as regards foreign politics. Neither Heydebrandt, nor Spahn, nor Bassermann, nor even Richter was capable of checking the information supplied by the Chancellor, or which came from the large patriotic associations. There were no readers for the English, French, and Italian papers, with which the reading-room was abundantly supplied. Only the Poles and the representatives of Alsace-Lorraine perused them.

During the sixteen years I was in the Reichstag I noted but one exception to this rule. Herr von Stollberg-Wernigerode, the President who followed Count von Ballestrem, came every morning at 10 o'clock to take *Le Figaro* and *Le Nouvelliste d'Alsace-Lorraine* from the reading-room. He even deigned one day to express to me the pleasure he took in reading my journal.

The Imperial Government had a splendid opportunity of directing its foreign policy as it liked, in a Parliament where all the parties accorded it their confidence so liberally. The most hazardous affirmations of the Chancellor were accepted without the least examination. The solemn



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speech which Prince von Bülow or Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg delivered every year when the Budget of Foreign Affairs came on for its second reading was without doubt the great event of the session; but the Governmental orator was always the only speaker, or when, perchance, leaders of groups rose to speak after him, it was only to complete his declarations by information which, to the knowledge of everyone, had been supplied them by the Foreign Office. This abdication of Parliament was both a strength and a weakness. The nation and its representatives formed a block before the foreigner, but, on the other hand, the Emperor and the Chancellor, unhampered in their movements, could lead the country into the worst complications, without public opinion being able to react.

If the Reichstag went to meet this servitude, the Press was obliged to accept it. Every morning the contributors to the Berlin newspapers and the correspondents of the big provincial dailies called at a fixed hour at the offices of the Wilhelmstrasse, where an official of the Foreign Office gave them an account of the exterior situation of the Empire. Woe to him who, in his articles, did not keep to instructions! He was immediately excluded from these instructive conferences and deprived of the official manna. Consequently the newspapers always struck with perfect accord the Governmental note. This impressive unanimity often deceived the foreigner, by making him believe that Germany's policy came from the soul of the people. Now, if it is true that, during recent years, the German people, subjected to methodical training, have supported all the wild claims of Pan-Germanism, we should be wrong in supposing that, more free and better advised, it would have been incapable of respecting the rights of other nationalities.

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Naturally gregarious, and trained from childhood in the practice of the most rigid intellectual discipline, the German accepts the ready-made formulas imposed upon him. Subjected to a democratic *régime*, he might, perhaps, in time recover his individuality ; but before 1914 he was acquainted with only blind submission to the guidance of his rulers and their inspirers, the Pan-Germans.

The stupidities I have heard concerning foreign politics during the sixteen years I was in the Reichstag are hardly believable. My colleagues spoke of France with disdainful pity. This unfortunate country was in a state of complete decomposition. With the complicity of a venal administration and a rotten Parliament, every vice was displayed there. There was no longer either religion, or morals, or shame. Our literature was tainted, our middle-classes were cruelly egoistic, and our army was without discipline. The old Latin civilisation, already so compromised in dirty Italy and backward Spain, was submerged by a fetid mud in that "beautiful France," where, however, she had formerly shone with such brilliance.

"Beware !" I often used to say to Erzberger when he treated me to these stereotyped phrases ; "France is the country of sudden awakenings, of prodigious resurrections."

"Nonsense !" he replied in his passionate voice. "We'll overthrow your idol with our little finger. And look out for breakages. It will be not five but fifty thousand millions of francs we shall exact from the conquered, and we shall impose upon her a treaty of commerce which will paralyse her for a century."

This threat always recurred in my colleagues' conversations when they spoke of France. In their malevolent phrases one could detect both base envy and the most savage covetousness. Nevertheless, the brilliance of French

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culture filled semi-barbaric Germany with respect. At the same time the legendary wealth of the rival country exercised an irresistible attraction on the pillagers of the North.

Every time that German diplomacy received a check, France, "eaten up with a desire for revenge," was made responsible for it. "There would be no peace in Europe until the eternal mar-joy had been reduced to impotence."

It is a curious thing that, as soon as a conflict arose, whether it came from the direction of Russia, the protector of the Slavs, or from that of England, anxious to retain the command of the seas, all the members of the Reichstag immediately began to speak impudently of "France, the hostage." Thus, during the early years of the reign of Edward VII, when it seemed as though any durable reconciliation with the Anglo-Saxons had become impossible, it was currently said in the Reichstag, "Very well! Our fleet will certainly be blockaded in our ports, but, whether France wishes to join with England or not, we shall secure guarantees on her territory. She it is who will pay the expenses of the enterprise."

Frenchmen were thus to bear the responsibility and suffer the consequences of everything unpleasant which happened to the Germanic Empire. Hatred of the English broke out among the Germans only later, when, under the inspiration of Prince von Bülow, the magic word of "world politics" (*Weltpolitik*) became the motto of William II.

How many times I have heard that flaming word, which henceforth was to galvanise the whole nation, repeated in the lobbies of the Reichstag! *Weltpolitik*; that signified the domination of the entire universe. "Nothing must happen in the world," the Emperor had proudly declared, "before Germany has said her word."



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And the whole nation docilely repeated his arrogant words.

But, to attain the desired end, it was necessary that Germany, already possessing the strongest army, should also have a first-rate navy. It was by waving that bawble *Weltpolitik* that Prince von Bülow obtained the vote for enormous naval credits.

However, they abstained from provoking England until the hour came when the Empire could measure itself with her on the seas. The Chancellor had given the instructions—"No difficulties with Great Britain until our naval constructions are finished." And the docile members of the Reichstag repeated in the lobbies, "We will settle accounts with the English, but first of all we must send them to sleep with friendly declarations, so that they will not profit by their formidable advance. The awakening will be all the ruder for them when, having got up to them or outstripped them, we speak with the master's voice." These remarks were made openly. It is rather surprising that their echo did not reach the islanders, especially at the time when Viscount Haldane tried to obtain an Anglo-German maritime convention relative to the limitation of naval constructions, and when Germany, after long and painful negotiations, refused to accept the British principle of "two flags."

In his *Memoirs*, Prince von Bülow confesses with supreme effrontery that such was indeed his policy.

"Supported to-day by a respectable navy," he writes, "we are, as regards England, in a different position from what we were in fifteen years ago, when it was necessary for us, as much as possible, to avoid a conflict with that Power, until we had built our fleet."

What chiefly struck me in the conversations which I had

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with my colleagues of all parties was the profound disdain these ignorant men professed for the allies of their country. To hear them talk, Austria, a Slavonicised Power, could only regain its ancient splendour through Prussian discipline. The whole of Germany laughed over the lesson which William II gave Francis Joseph when, meeting the heir to the Crown of the Hapsburgs at the funeral of the Prince Regent of Bavaria, the Emperor said to the Archduke :

“ You are making a good deal of noise with *my* big sabre.”

Was it not the duty of Germany’s “ brilliant second ” to accept without control the orders of Berlin ?

As to the Italians, there was not an insult they did not heap upon them. These “ macaroni-eaters ” and “ guitar-players ” were decidedly insupportably conceited. They owed everything to Germany—both their national security and economic prosperity. At the first “ waltz ” they would indeed make them feel it.

At the time of the Tripoli expedition, the German Press, on the order of the Chancellor, for weeks called the Italians ruffians, pirates, and wreckers. Erzberger foamed with rage at the thought that the only Turkish province where Germany could hope to gain a foothold on the shores of the Mediterranean was about to fall into the hands of those “ wretched fellows of Rome.” It was on hearing these wild invectives that I judged of the appetite of Pan-Germanism, of that monstrous doctrine which excludes even Germany’s allies from the benefit of future conquests.

Let us once more note moreover that there is not a man in the Reichstag capable of resisting the official doctrine, and that all the members, even those who belong to the governing *élite*, merely repeat over and over again

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the ready-made phrases of the Press inspired by the offices of the Wilhelmstrasse.

Here is a suggestive fact which proves how gregarious a people the Germans are. When Edward VII and the Queen of England consented, after a long family disagreement, to pay an official visit to their Imperial nephew in the Prussian capital, the reception prepared for them in Berlin surpassed in brilliance and enthusiasm everything I had seen up to then. A few days before, the Prussian newspapers were still overflowing with insults to wicked England, whose intention was "to encircle" Germany. They were now filled with frenzied articles celebrating the return of their "blood relations" to the homeland. In the streets, brilliantly decorated with flags, the crowd vociferated tremendous "Hochs." Garlands of red, white, and blue paper, suspended from the trees in the Unter den Linden, formed a veritable canopy under which the promenaders joyously chatted about the promising perspective of an Anglo-German Alliance. With what endless exclamations the people of Berlin welcomed their guests of a day!

I amused myself on that occasion by recalling, in my paper, that, after Jena, the Prussians had received their conqueror of the day before with the same signs of joy, and that already in those days they had decorated the lime trees of their celebrated avenue with paper leaves and flowers, a symbol of their platitude and bad taste. That brought me a tremendous slating in the semi-official Press. It is true that, a few weeks later, fresh instructions having been given, the same Press resumed its old surly tone towards England.

I also wish to point out that until 1911 German policy, whilst aggressive, did not seem to tend towards the coming



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war. The events in the Balkans, in the course of which Germany was constantly checked by England's policy, gave birth, first of all in official circles and then in parliamentary ones, to the desire to start the great world conflict with as little delay as possible. From that date war was spoken of in the Reichstag as an irresistible eventuality. Consequently, the military Bills brought before Parliament three years in succession, and which strengthened the army to the extent of a third of its effective in time of peace, at the very moment when the finances of the Empire were in a most lamentable condition, were passed by overwhelming majorities. Official spokesmen, as well as those of the *bourgeois* parties, frankly spoke from the tribune of the "struggle on two fronts" (the French front and the Russian). They openly counted on English neutrality and the tardy but certain assistance of Italy.

As it was necessary to have a pretext for letting loose the storm at the moment chosen by the General Staff, German statesmen constantly strove to have two or three reasons for a conflict in reserve, such as the Balkanic imbroglio, the Moroccan affair, and, last but not least, the Foreign Legion.

Bassermann had made a speciality of this last-named pretext for a German quarrel. This Mannheim lawyer was seized with veritable attacks of hysteria when he spoke of the tortures inflicted on soldiers of the Legion of Germanic birth by the French galley-sergeants. For month after month, under the direction of this experienced conductor of the orchestra, the Press reproduced the most improbable stories anent the martyrdom of the poor victims of *welche* barbarity, who, however, ought to have been regarded by the Germans as mere vulgar deserters. Even the stage seized hold of this melodramatic subject. France

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was literally dragged in the mud by all the scribblers and mummers of the Empire. If the assassination of Francis Ferdinand had not precipitated the march of events, it is probable that Germany would have called upon France to disband the Legion. A pretext for war, henceforth desired by everyone in Germany, was necessary. In one way or another, they would have found it.

I am not writing thoughtlessly. Since 1913 we all had the almost physical impression that the great crisis was near at hand. This is so true that my colleagues of the Strassburg Parliament all began to hoard gold at that time. In paying for their smallest purchases they presented 100-mark notes, so as to obtain coin, which they put on one side for bad times.

I had the opportunity several times of warning my friends in France of the danger that threatened them. Few were those who paid attention to my cry of alarm. And yet all the signs of the evil intentions of Germany were there. Was not Erzberger applauded by the entire Reichstag when he stated, in the face of all evidence, that the last increase in the German effective was a "reply" to the voting of the three years' Military Service Bill by the French Parliament?

This same Erzberger, as well as Oertel and Bassermann, had often said to me:

"In 1905 we missed a unique opportunity of finishing with France, then completely disarmed."

In the country of all these freebooters there was always the same eager desire—to enslave and despoil "the hereditary enemy."

The inexperience of the German Parliamentary representatives in matters of foreign politics will be clearly seen from the following case. Ten years ago, a few

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Democrats (certainly in agreement with the Chancellor) circulated in the Reichstag a petition addressed to the Duma, urgently begging their Russian colleagues to grant a broader autonomy to Finland.

When Müller-Meiningen presented this petition to me, I said to him, "My dear colleague, I will sign this paper on the day you authorise the French Chamber to ask the Reichstag, officially, to put an end to the servitude of the inhabitants of Alsace-Lorraine." Old Müller is still running around.

It was doubtless to avenge his discomfiture on that occasion that he took charge, in 1915, of the report on my expulsion from the Reichstag.

The history of this report is amusing. Müller-Meiningen, in order to deprive me legally of my seat, could find but a single argument. "Since the beginning of the war," it ran, "Wetterlé has published in French newspapers several articles signed 'An Ex-member of the Reichstag,' which shows that he himself no longer considers he belongs to this Parliament. One can, therefore, conclude that he has handed in his resignation as a member in a regular manner." The Reichstag accepted this extraordinary reasoning and I was deprived of my seat.

But I had another seat—that of a Deputy in the Alsace-Lorraine Chamber. In this country of the Empire, it is not Parliament but the Court of Appeal of Colmar which decides regarding the validity of mandates. Instructed about my case by the President of the Second Chamber, the Court of Appeal, in its turn, pronounced forfeiture, but for reasons of propriety. "A man against whom an action for high treason is pending," ran the judgment, "cannot belong to a German Parliament." The interesting point, however, about this affair is that the Court of Appeal,



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in its long statement of reasons, refutes Müller-Meiningen's argumentation. " We should be wrong in considering that the fact of Wetterlé having written articles signed with the signature ' An Ex-member of the Reichstag ' constitutes a regular resignation. To be valid, a resignation must be addressed to the President of the Assembly, and be signed by the resigner's own hand." I should never have thought the judges of Colmar were capable of giving the Reichstag such a lesson.

## CHAPTER VI

### PAN-GERMANISM

Without Rights—Duplicate Majorities—Kaempf and Paasche—  
The Empire and the Colonies—The Pan-Germans—Prince  
von Hohenlohe—Composition of the Reichstag—Faking the  
Budget.

PARLIAMENTARISM is but a fiction in Germany. Doubtless the rules of the Reichstag anticipate the members' right of initiative. Yet this right remained until recent years purely fictitious. Indeed, when an interpellation was being discussed, the Government benches were almost always empty, the Chancellor and his collaborators showing by their voluntary absence that in principle they did not consider they were obliged to hold themselves at the disposal of members in order to reply to indiscreet questions. As, in consequence, debates on an interpellation could not end in the voting of an order of the day, these talks were without object. The Reichstag understood this so well that it set aside one day per week (*Schwerinstag*—Schwerin's day—named after the author of the proposal) for these sterile exercises in parliamentary eloquence.

In 1911, at the time the rules were revised, the members thought they had scored an enormous success when the Chancellor agreed that interpellations should be concluded with a vote of approbation or censure. But as this vote

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in no way either consolidated or shook the Government, the concession was a purely formal one.

Private Bills generally met with the same fate as interpellations. It was necessary that they should all be laid on the table within the first week of the Parliamentary session, numbered according to the importance attached to them by their authors. This being done, the director classified them, not in accordance with their urgency, but in the order of the numerical importance of the group which had presented them, at the rate of one Bill for every group. On coming to the end of the first round, they passed to the second, and so on in succession. These Bills, even when they obtained a majority in the Reichstag, were rarely accepted by the Federal Council, which generally treated them with disdain, for it hardly took the trouble to read them. The improvisations of Parliament, I delight in recollecting, often merit no better fate.

It was thus that the Centre, after the scandal caused by the Heintze case, took it into its head to modify the legislation regarding licentiousness in the streets. That honest man Roehren had been entrusted with the drawing up of the Bill. He thought he had solved the problem in fifty laboriously drawn-up clauses, in which he imagined he had foreseen everything. Unfortunately, this complicated structure rested on the fragile basis of the sense of shame, which is very variable. In reference to it, Groeber, of the Centre, made the following interesting disclosure :

“Only the French know how to draw up Bills. For instance, take the Béranger Law. It consists of only five lines, but it enables you to reach all offenders. We try to include all possibilities in the Bill itself, instead of leaving the estimation of them to jurisprudence. Thence



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spring complicated and almost always inapplicable texts. The trees end by preventing us seeing the forest. Study the Roehren Bill. Its meshes are numerous and close, and yet it lets all the big fish escape."

The debates on the "Heintze Bill" (as it was generally called, after the name of the *souteneur* who had led to it being brought in) were extraordinary. There was a secret sitting of the Reichstag. Roehren and Bebel gave us impressive statistics regarding the number of prostitutes and other disreputable characters of Berlin, Munich, Cologne, and Hamburg. On the table of the House was a heap of suggestive documents. What an abominable secret museum, and how lowering this exposure of her secret vices was to virtuous Germany!

I was somewhat scandalised by the eagerness with which my colleagues began to examine minutely the incriminating articles placed at their disposal. I was still more so when I ascertained that this display of filth inspired no virile resolution on the part of either Chancellor or Parliament. The Bill was, in fact, thrown out, without any attempt being made to substitute more acceptable legislative formulas in its place. Official Germany resigned itself to allowing the flood of debauch to rise, without even attempting to raise a dam against it. And yet, in the eyes of all the puritans of Berlin, Paris remains the modern Babylon. Such hypocrisy would be disconcerting if one did not know that German virtues—fidelity to a promise, scientific probity, civic courage and honesty in business—are a hollow sham.

The closed life of parties in the Reichstag is easily explained. In the German Empire political groups have no responsibility, since they never come into power. They are supernumeraries and not the principal actors in the

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political drama, if I may be allowed to express myself in that way.

In countries possessing a parliamentary *régime*, the parties, compelled periodically to assume the burden of government, know how to adapt their programmes to the necessities of public life. Thus they acquire that practical knowledge which German parliamentarians lack completely. The latter are face to face with Ministries formed, apart from majorities, by irresponsible Sovereigns. Consequently, the groups, which have not the anxiety of accommodating their political theories to the possibilities of the administration, are able to isolate themselves in the most intransigent doctrinarianism.

As, in consequence, they hope to obtain a few realisations only by Governmental favour and compromises with other parties, the Reichstag, like the Parliaments of the various States, presents that curious spectacle of an assembly in which the most disciplined and the most narrowly doctrinarian fractions nevertheless exhaust themselves by repugnant bargainings.

Whatever may be the composition of the Imperial Parliament, the Chancellor has, therefore, every advantage. He can always count on finding there duplicate majorities, provided he knows how to pay the price for the "conversion" of one of the principal groups of the Reichstag.

Prince von Bülow was the first who, since Bismarck's "Kartell" was overthrown, attempted, in 1903, to create a compact majority. He succeeded by forcing the patriotic note.

Up to 1907 the Imperial Parliament was composed of a Right (Conservatives and National Liberals) which was not sufficiently powerful to obtain a majority, even in military, naval, and colonial questions, against an ever

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possible coalition of the Centre, the Democrats, and the Socialists, supported by the Polish fraction and the Alsace-Lorraine group. Prince von Bülow, by offering official support to the Democrats (Radicals) on the condition that henceforth they supported him in all demands of a national order, succeeded in reducing the number of Socialist seats by half. From that time the Centre no longer played the part of arbitrator between the Right and the Left of the Assembly. Prince von Bülow always denied that he wished to combat the Centre, the assistance of which was often so precious to him ; but there can be no doubt that he hoped to deprive a party, which, in his opinion, made conditions for its support too burdensome, of its preponderant position.

He fully succeeded. Of all Parliaments, the Reichstag of 1907 was the most patriotic. The domesticated Democrats voted enthusiastically in favour of all military credits, and the Centre, henceforth powerless, only thought, whilst rivalling with the groups of the Right in patriotism, of making sure of Governmental favours.

In order to obtain this national concentration of parties, Prince von Bülow had the cleverness during the discussion to utter a magic word which he thought would turn aside the debate from its right course. "Policy of the Block"—such was the label which he stuck on his programme. By borrowing this term from the home policy of France, the Chancellor thought he would call to arms the anti-clerical hatred of the German Lutherans. The manœuvre was a skilful one, since, on the one hand, it was to win over many waverers to Prussian nationalism and, on the other, to checkmate the Centre, which had all sorts of reasons for fearing the revival of the "*Kulturkampf*."

The German "Block" was not, however, specifically



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anti-clerical. Bülow himself had never thought of giving it that character.

The word was merely to act as a scarecrow, as a means of blackmailing the Centre. It produced its full effect, since Spahn and Erzberger soon became the most convinced and determined supporters of Imperialism.

The Reichstag of 1911 presented quite a different aspect. Not national questions, but economic problems raised by the tremendous increase of indirect taxation, had been the platform during the electoral struggle. The Socialists were thus able to win 110 seats, with the result that on questions of home policy the Right (Conservatives, Liberals, and Democrats) and the Left (Centre, Socialists, Poles, and Alsace-Lorrainers) were equal.

Von Bethmann-Hollweg's first Reichstag (the one still sitting) came within an ace of not being constituted. The election of the President, Vice-Presidents, and Secretaries gave rise to stormy incidents. According to the traditions of the House, the presidency ought to have been given to the strongest party numerically, that is to say, to the Socialists. But the *bourgeois* parties could not resign themselves to this extremity. As, however, the Conservatives and the National-Liberals refused to give their votes to a member of the Centre, this last group voted, out of spite, for Bebel. If the Poles had not shirked at the last moment, the patriarch of the social revolution would have obtained the majority. The provisional executive which resulted from these elections was composed of a Conservative, a National-Liberal, and a Socialist, the ineffable Scheidemann. A month later, when the definitive executive was formed, an understanding had not yet been arrived at between Conservatives and Centrists. Therefore the small group of Democrats obtained the presidency

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(occupied by the aged Kaempf) and a vice-presidency (held by Dove), whilst the Liberals delegated that insupportable chatterer Paasche to the other vice-presidency. Nevertheless, during four weeks, we saw Scheidemann occupy the presidential chair of the Reichstag for an hour or two at each sitting. His glory was ephemeral; but one cannot eat of the pleasant fruit of fame with impunity. After his short acquaintance with honours, this former compositor was to retain a taste for high rank and influential relations. Whomsoever has not heard him say, with a rising gorge, "I call upon his Excellency, the Chancellor of the Empire, to speak," cannot penetrate the mystery of the soul of an upstart.

President Kaempf was a thin little man of pitiful appearance. He belonged to the business world, and in that capacity had been for many years the head of the Council of the Elders of the City of Berlin—a body equivalent to a French Chamber of Commerce. Elected at the second ballot, in 1911, by a majority of one vote, he was the only *bourgeois* member of Parliament of the Prussian capital. This tremulous old man is, moreover, afflicted with deafness, of which he knows how to take advantage, so as not to have to call his political friends to order when they give way to intemperate language. He has a long beard, but his upper lip is shaved, giving him the appearance of a Quaker. Never was the Reichstag presided over by a less decorative personage.

I shall say nothing about Dove, except that his insignificance is disheartening.

Paasche is more interesting. This professor of theoretical agriculture of Charlottenburg is the busiest of the members of the Reichstag. His interminable speeches, delivered with a rapidity which drives to despair the most

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expert stenographers, are very learned but badly composed. Paasche has been entrusted with numerous missions abroad. It was during one of these that a disagreeable adventure happened to him. The story was told by a Socialist newspaper in the following words :

“ A member of the Reichstag was recently in New York. Hunger, desire and to some extent the devil urging him on, he allowed himself to be enticed away and robbed. The imprudent man, crestfallen, went to the police station to lodge a complaint, and there had to reveal his identity. *So was kann einem paschieren* ”—the last word being substituted for *passieren*, thus clearly pointing out this victim of Venus.

The whole of Germany was amused by this discourteous revelation. But Paasche did not lose the esteem of his colleagues on account of such a peccadillo.

Another member belonging to the Right, Prince Hatzfeld, was less fortunate. One day he was caught by a railway ticket collector in the act of insulting a lady passenger. The over-zealous employee having taken down his name and address, the authorities had great difficulty in hushing up the scandal. The Prince paid dearly for this act of folly, since there slipped through his fingers, successively, the presidency of the Reichstag, the post of Statthalter of Alsace-Lorraine, and an Embassy. He is, however, a very agreeable man and of more than average intelligence.

Colonial policy was the object of constant thought on the part of the Government and the Parliamentary groups. Having taken her place among the great naval Powers late in the day, Germany found all the great colonies occupied by her rivals. She contented herself, with an ill grace, with what no one else wanted. Hence a deep



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irritation, a contemptible jealousy, and a firm determination to lay hands on the possessions of other nations by every means in her power.

“The Colonial Empire of the British is too extensive,” my colleagues of the middle-class parties were constantly telling me. “As to France, she cannot exploit her own owing to an insufficient number of colonists. It is unjust and intolerable that a nation with a high birth-rate, like ours, cannot succeed in establishing itself in unpeopled parts, which we could turn to profit, whilst nations with a limited natality allow all this wealth to go to waste.”

This reasoning, constantly repeated by members of the Reichstag, had become part and parcel of the common talk. We heard it over and over again in all the beer-shops.

Germany made enormous sacrifices for her colonies. Independently of the credits voted by Parliament, considerable sums were collected by the Colonial League, one of the most powerful and most active of the associations of the Empire.

Deputies and members of the League openly displayed their annexationist plans. The Belgian as well as the French Congo were to be theirs by right. It was necessary, at all costs, that East and West Africa should be united by a broad band of territory, cutting the Black Continent in two. In the West a sufficient effective was to be maintained to be able to invade and occupy Cape Colony. Quite naturally, the Portuguese possessions and Morocco would become German. Brazil, two provinces of which were occupied by 500,000 emigrants of German origin, would be dismembered, if it would not accept the protectorate of Germany. Chili, Venezuela, and Mexico, countries where German influence was very great, would sooner or later come under the domination of the Empire.

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As to China, it would quite naturally come within the sphere of Germanic influence, since Kiao-chau was but a short distance from Peking.

How many times I have read and heard these wild divagations! Awaiting the realisation of these wonderful plans, Parliament and the Colonial League set to work with equal zeal to establish bases of operation for the German Navy. To be able to understand the formidable appetite of the Germans for domination, it was necessary to be present at the deliberations of the Budget Committee. If the enterprise of 1914 had succeeded as its organisers hoped it would, the whole world would have been in servitude.

The League provided all articles required by colonists, even housekeepers. It assumed, in fact, the mission of mobilising a large number of big, strong girls of Brandenburg, and sent them, carriage paid, to the Cameroons and East Africa for the German farmers, who were requested to choose their legitimate "collaborators" from among them. The lordly race must not, indeed, prostitute itself by cross-breeding. German blood in the colonies, as in Europe, must remain free from any admixture.

It is, indeed, a rather curious fact that of recent years the Pan-Germans, carrying their theories of racial exclusivism to the uttermost point, protested with the greatest violence against marriages between the descendants of Germans and women of other races. The Hebrews themselves did not watch over the purity of their race more jealously.

Germany's colonial policy, however, was not always very fortunate. I need do no more than recall the Peters, Aremberg, and Puttkamer scandals to establish the fact that, in negro countries as much as and sometimes more than on the old Continent, the Germans remained the

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brutes they have always been. At the time of their campaign against the Herreros, in East Africa, they exterminated the native population at the risk of being completely deprived of labour.

The influence of the Pan-Germans was prodigious and daily grew stronger. In 1908 the management of the League published a summary of its work. With legitimate pride, they pointed out in that voluminous report that the Chancellors of the Empire had ended by adopting the whole of their programme. The concordance between the successive demands of Pan-Germanism and the acts of the Government was proved in the most rigorous manner, year by year and almost month by month.

This marvellously organised League had, indeed, secured the active collaboration of the whole corporation of teachers and also, since the accentuation of the industrial crisis, that of the big producers' associations. As the Prussian Junkers, on the other hand, were quite won over to its annexationist theories, one can state that everyone of any authority in Germany supported its efforts.

Abroad, the members of the League were for a long time regarded as madmen, destitute of any influence over the German nation. The Pan-Germans in no way complained of this disdainful disregard of their political action, because it favoured their designs. As a matter of fact, in a country where the Government had always exercised an indisputable authority, they had succeeded in dominating the Chancellor himself and in dictating their wishes to him.

I saw their power grow in the Reichstag. But old Prince von Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, who, in 1898, held the post of First Councillor to the Emperor, was too wary and too sceptical a diplomatist to submit to the injunctions of the League. On the other hand, Prince von Bülow,



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who naturally inclined towards violent solutions, was wholly in favour of the doctrine of an all-powerful Germany and used all his energies, especially during the seven years he was at the Chancellery, to win over the parties of the Left to the ideas of Hasse and Klass.

Since his arrival in power the evolution of Pan-Germanism was rapid and complete. I have already pointed it out above, but shall have occasion to return to the subject later on.

Parisians have not yet forgotten Prince von Hohenlohe, who for so many years was the inconspicuous but nevertheless remarkably skilful representative in the French capital of Germany. This slim little man, weakly in appearance and modest in attitude, was afflicted with an inordinate personal ambition. When misadventures of a private nature necessitated his removal, he got himself paid royally for his desistance by the post of Statthalter of Alsace-Lorraine. After the fall of the Chancellor von Caprivi, the Emperor William II offered the Prince his post. Von Hohenlohe needed pressing. It was not to his liking to exchange a well-paid post, in which he exercised sovereign prerogatives, for a wretchedly paid office which would oblige him to submit to the criticisms of a Parliament still imperfectly disciplined.

In order to overcome his resistance, it was necessary to double the Chancellor's salary—to make it 100,000 marks (£5,000) instead of 50,000, with which Bismarck and Caprivi had been content. Another reason—quite a personal one—made Prince von Hohenlohe decide to put on the shoes of the founder of the Empire. He had inherited the Russian estate of Werky. Now, a short time before, the Tsar had issued a ukase obliging all German landlords in Russia to sell their lands within a period of

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nine months. The Statthalter of Alsace-Lorraine, fearing the disastrous consequences of this forced sale, had gone to St. Petersburg to obtain from Alexander III an extension of time. But, at the reception at which he hoped to present his request, the Tsar turned his back on him. Prince von Hohenlohe believed that the Emperor of All the Russias would not refuse the Chancellor of the Empire what he had refused the Governor of the annexed provinces. Events proved that he was right. The nine millions the Werky estate was worth were saved.

I was forgetting to relate that before he succeeded in this clever combination Prince von Hohenlohe conceived another, which had no success whatever. He endeavoured, in fact, to make his son Alexander a naturalised Russian—that very son who, a few years later, was appointed Prefect of Upper Alsace. After having declared that he was ready to renounce his German nationality, for the big sum of money, Alexander did everything in his power, as will be remembered, to Germanise the people of Alsace-Lorraine. When, later, he became, thanks to the most excessive electoral pressure, Deputy for the arrondissement of Haguenau-Wissemburg, I reminded him from the tribune of the Reichstag of that unpatriotic act, to the great joy of my colleagues of the Centre and the Left.

Chancellor von Hohenlohe rarely appeared in Parliament. More than mediocre as an orator, he was unable to speak without the aid of a manuscript, from which he never raised his eyes. One day he happened to get the sheets of his statement mixed up. For more than ten minutes he was painfully occupied in putting his notes in order, whilst the most unseemly bursts of laughter came from all benches.

The Prince, as one knows, was devoid of all character.

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The Emperor, who prided himself on being his own Chancellor, had chosen him chiefly for that reason, just as later, after having imprudently selected a very individualistic Chancellor, in the person of Prince von Bülow, he was to replace him by the ductile official who bears the name of Bethmann-Hollweg.

At first the Reichstag adapted itself perfectly to this phantom Chancellor. Its whole activity was absorbed in economic struggles, and Prince von Hohenlohe, equally unconnected with either the ultra-Protectionist Conservatives or the moderate Free traders of the parties of the Left, was lightly handled by all parties.

*À propos* of the conflict of economic interests at the Reichstag, I should like to point out that, contrary to what happens elsewhere, the composition of the Imperial Parliament has always been very mixed. I have only fairly recent statistics at my disposal ; but, as the general physiognomy of the Parliament has never varied much, they will suffice to show that all professions were represented there.

The following are the figures for the elections of 1907 and 1912 :—

Agriculturists, 106–88 ; manufacturers, 21–5 ; artisans, 20–21 ; tradesmen, 13–17 ; workmen, 0–3 ; persons of independent means, 17–13 ; journalists, 37–58 ; ecclesiastics, 21–21 ; professors, 24–22 ; doctors and chemists, 7–8 ; lawyers, 32–39 ; magistrates, 35–24 ; public officials, 22–21 ; communal employees, 9–7 ; employees of private enterprises, 32–50.

What will particularly strike the reader in this list is the large number of magistrates and other officials who figure in it. German electoral law recognised indeed that all officials have the right to put up for Parliament



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and to carry out their duties there without being obliged to send in their resignations. It even allows the elected official to continue to receive the whole of his salary, whilst enjoying the right of a vacation equal to the duration of the sessions.

An official, definitely appointed to administrative employment, is the owner of his post. He can be deprived of it only by a judgment of the superior administrative tribunal of the State to which he belongs. As a result of this, he recovers his entire independence of opinion out of office hours. Should he belong to a party in opposition to the Government and take an active part in politics, he will suffer, perhaps, as regards promotion. But he will still be protected against all repressive measures. These liberal provisions of German legislation are of a nature to surprise us. They result in leading the political parties, which are always short of candidates, to offer numerous seats to men who, through their experience in public affairs, seem particularly apt for parliamentary duties.

One must admit that these members of the Reichstag who are both officials and deputies render signal services both to the country and the groups to which they belong. Here is a curious fact. The day after the closure of each session, these employees, who, the day before, controlled the Government, are obliged to resume their often modest duties (there are teachers and postmen among them) and to submit once more to all the arrogance of the chiefs immediately above them.

Our attention is attracted to another point in the above statistics. During the last two legislatures there were first 43 and then 110 Socialist members. Now, the 1907 Parliament did not contain a single working-man member, whilst that of 1911 only had three,

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of whom two belonged to the Centre and the Right. The members of the Extreme Left are, therefore, almost all recruited from the liberal professions, 43 of them being journalists, 7 lawyers, 2 municipal employees, and 37 industrial employees. That explains how Possibilism and Imperialism have been able to exercise such great ravages among men the majority of whom belong to the middle class and have never broken their friendly relations with their families and the comrades of their childhood.

It would be a manifest exaggeration to pretend that in Germany Socialism is the party in which all the incapables and wastrels take refuge. On the contrary, we find a large number of men of worth in the fraction of the Extreme Left. It is also true that the Socialist Party has largely benefited by the exclusiveness shown by the other groups in the choice of their candidates. One day, one of my friends expressed to the father of a Collectivist member his surprise at seeing this young and brilliant writer throw himself heart and soul into the revolutionary agitation.

“What can you expect?” replied the excellent man, without malice. “My son would certainly have preferred to place his ability at the service of another cause; but he is ambitious, and he knew that, being of modest birth and having but slender means at his disposal, there was no future for him in the *bourgeois* groups, whereas the Socialists would be very happy to have the assistance of an intellectual man.”

That is the history of many members of the so-called Revolutionary Party. Especially is it that of the Jews, who, in Germany, are systematically thrust aside by the middle-class parties.

Few members of the Reichstag knew how to read the

## BEHIND THE SCENES IN THE REICHSTAG

Budget. The majority never even tried to decipher it. Müller-Fulda used to be immensely amused over this ignorance.

"Our Budget," he said to me one day, "is absolutely lacking in sincerity. Transfers of sums of money abound in it, and you must be a past master in the art of handling figures to know where you are. The principal concern of our statesmen is to hide from the foreigner the credits they devote first to military preparations and secondly to propaganda work, or, if you like, to the intelligence department, to espionage. In our financial Bill you will find but a modest sum of three millions for our Secret Service. Now, in all the chapters of the Budget are other credits which, under the most varied titles, are devoted to the same use. Moreover, we put our hands deeply into the secret funds of the other States."

Here I will relate a personal anecdote. Herr von Richthofen, the former Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, was easy to approach. I often conversed with him, and he seemed to take a certain amount of pleasure in meeting me. One day he complained in my presence of the excessive use which the English, in his opinion, made of their Secret Service funds to secure assistance in the foreign Press.

"Why don't you do the same?" I objected.

Taken quite unawares, Herr von Richthofen let slip the following significant confession:

"Ah! if we only still possessed the Guelph funds."

The Guelph funds were the revenue of the sequestered fortune of King George of Hanover. This revenue was estimated at sixteen million marks. Now, a short time before, the Prussian Government had given the full and entire possession of it to the Duke of Cumberland. Herr



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von Richthofen's thoughtless exclamation showed, however, that before this restitution the sixteen millions had been regularly used by Prussia in corrupting foreign newspapers. It had been necessary to reconstitute this Secret Service fund with the ordinary resources of the Budget. Little by little, and by means of skilful transfers, they had succeeded.

But once more I call upon Müller-Fulda to speak.

"Would you like an instance," he further said to me, "of the way they proceed in our country? A few years ago the French artillery was considerably in advance of ours. Their new field gun was much superior to that of the German Army. What was to be done? The transformation of our light artillery might have driven the French to profit by their advantage immediately. So the Chancellor called together the leaders of the groups and addressed them as follows, 'We have a model of a remarkable gun. To provide our troops with it we must dispose of a credit of 400 millions. The transformation, however, must take place in the deepest secrecy. Will you authorise me to spend that sum of money without setting it down in the Budget? With your consent, I will arrange the matter by means of skilful entries.' No sooner said than done! I will defy you to find a trace of those 400 millions in the four Budgets in question, where, however, they are indeed hidden. Apart from the few conspirators, our colleagues noticed nothing, and the majority are still in ignorance of the fact that they voted faked Budgets."

One can, therefore, affirm that in the German Empire control does not exist. The whole of the parliamentary jobbery is done in the back shop, where the Chancellor, with a few intimate friends, prepares, far from indiscreet eyes, his questionable operations.

## BEHIND THE SCENES IN THE REICHSTAG

A few days later that impenitent sceptic Müller-Fulda made me acquainted with the practices of the great German banks. On expressing my astonishment at seeing the Berlin banks subscribe 500 millions to the Russian loan at a moment when the market was very depressed, the member for the Centre burst out laughing and confided in me as follows :

“ We have no money, but we know how to make that of others fructify. Nominally, we subscribe to the Russian loan, but we shall pass on the scrip clandestinely to our correspondents in London and especially in Paris. We do the same, moreover, with our shares in the Bagdad-Ottoman Railways. By calling for the greater part, we secure considerable political advantages. Then, when that is done, we gradually get rid of these shares, the accumulation of which on our home market would represent a dead weight. What is the good of the internationalism of banking if we cannot find in it a compensation for the ostracism to which our national securities are subjected on the Paris Bourse and the London Stock Exchange ? A purely fictitious ostracism, however, for I can tell you in confidence that more than two thousand millions of our State loans sleep, in the form of pretty vignettes, in the safes of small French capitalists. Don't protest ! Our securities pay a high rate of interest, and we give big commissions to those who place them.”

It was again Müller-Fulda who, at the time of the Moroccan incidents, made the following disclosure to me :—

“ English intervention is possible. Our Government, in agreement with our shipowners, has foreseen it. All our captains who are on long voyages have been provided with envelopes containing secret orders, which they are to open as soon as they are informed of the imminence of

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a declaration of war. They will immediately hoist the United States flag from their mainmasts. In fact, in case of war, the Morgan Syndicate is the purchaser of the whole of our merchant fleet at a figure already agreed upon."

I do not know whether this agreement was ever really made with the American capitalists. But the declarations of Müller-Fulda, the best-informed man in the Reichstag, prove that it had been seriously thought of in the Governmental circles of Berlin, and that, from that period, they foresaw near and serious difficulties with Great Britain.



## CHAPTER VII

### MILITARISM IN GERMAN POLITICS

In the Tribune—The Parties—Erzberger—"En Famille"—The Tariff—Dissolutions.

THE first time I wanted to speak in the Reichstag I had a painful surprise. On the list of speakers, in the possession of the secretary, I occupied the third place. Now, ten members mounted into the tribune before me and I had to wait two days before I was able to deliver my little speech.

Here is the explanation of this phenomenon. The rules of the House indeed provide for members speaking in the order of their application, but the rules, in this respect as in many others, are constantly broken. A member of the Reichstag does not exist individually; only the group to which he is attached is taken into consideration. It is the custom, therefore, for the Parliamentary fractions, each in its turn, to delegate to the tribune one of its members in the numerical order of the groups.

In 1898 the speaker of the Centre came first, and after him, in succession, those of the Conservatives, the National-Liberals, the Socialists, the Imperial Party, the two principal Democratic groups, the Anti-Semites, the Jews, the Alsace-Lorrainers, and finally the Popular Party of Wurtemberg. If the debate was not concluded after

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this first procession of orators, they came to what the Germans call "the second garnishing," but always keeping strictly to the same order.

I would also add (and this detail is important) that, in the Parliamentary fractions, the principal speaker and the speakers who, should it so happen, speak a second and a third time, are chosen by the directing committees and bound to submit the text of their speeches to them. Very rarely, and only at the end of a sitting, is a member who has serious reasons for separating himself from his political friends over a question of local interest authorised to express a few timid reservations. In this case, he must also suffer the severe censorship of his leaders.

How is it that German members of Parliament can tolerate such servitude? The reason is very simple. German political parties are endowed with a wholly military organisation. The recruited elector does not give his vote to a man but to a programme. He has blind faith in the decisions of the committee of his district, which itself accepts the orders of the central committee, almost without discussing them. It is, therefore, this last committee which decides on the choice of candidates and gives them their investiture.

Henceforth, the dependence of the elected member is absolute. If he does not give proofs of absolute submission, he knows that he runs the risk of losing his seat through the will of his chiefs. But if, on the contrary, he obeys at a sign, his re-election is assured.

The organisation of the parties is so rigid that one can foretell precisely the number of votes at their disposal in each constituency. The Centre, for instance, cannot be beaten in any of its ninety-two strongholds, the Socialists dispose of forty-six assured seats, and the Conserva-

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tives of sixty. On the other hand, the National-Liberals have only a very limited number of rotten boroughs, and the Democrats hardly any. Both are able to maintain the number of their seats only by electoral compromises entered into with other groups.

According as the Liberal Parties contract, at the general elections, an alliance with the Right or the Left, the number of Socialist seats exceeds a hundred or falls to fifty.

However that may be, these agreements, made by the central committees, possess an obligatory and imperative character for the parties. This always leads to the same result, namely, that individually the fate of candidates is in the hands of the prime movers of the political organisations, and that the unfortunate deputies are obliged, in order to obtain the official support of their leaders, to renounce all independence.

The aged Marbe, member for Friburg-en-Brigau—an honest man if ever there was one—often used to say to me :

“I beg you never to consent to belong to the Centre. I belong to it—and for how many years past! I suffer horribly through being obliged to vote in favour of Bills of which I disapprove. Our high priests dispose of us as though we were mere cattle. Our votes are sold to the highest bidder, and they regard it as our duty to sustain the market. Sometimes I have tried to protest, at the meetings of the fraction, against combinations which supremely displeased me. They always pointed out to me that I was too late, for the compromise had already been agreed upon by our diplomatists.”

Marbe was right. A hundred, nay, a thousand times have I heard the echo of similar complaints. Discipline was, however, stronger than these revolts in the name



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of commonsense and honesty. Müller-Fulda, of whom I have several times spoken, spent his time harshly criticising the decisions of Lieber and Spahn. Never, however, did he openly combat them, and at a plenary sitting he voted in their favour. The satirical smile with which he then coupled his action only made his abdication more humiliating.

A few rare and ambitious men succeeded, however, in intimidating the great leaders. One of them was Erzberger.

Mathias Erzberger is a big fellow with a smart and vulgar face. He is in every way rotund—cheeks, body, arms, etc. On seeing him for the first time, nobody would guess that this mass of unhealthy-looking fat enveloped a most headstrong mind. When, however, you hear his rattle-like voice utter aphorisms in an imperative tone, doubt is no longer permissible—big Mathias knows what he wants and speaks out energetically.

A humble teacher of Wurtemberg, he first of all threw himself heart and soul into the anti-clerical movement. He was not long, however, in discovering that the Catholic Centre would assure him a more brilliant future than the Democracy. At a day's notice he turned his coat. His former adversaries, who had been able to appreciate his worth, opened wide their arms to him. In 1903 Erzberger, then barely twenty-eight years of age, was elected a member of the Reichstag.

Hardly had he taken his seat in Parliament when he laid siege to the committee of his party. Already taught by experience, he made himself insupportable to Spahn, whose policy inside the fraction he fiercely combated. The case was an embarrassing one. To strike the wolfling would perhaps have raised a scandal. "Was it not

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better to tame him ? ” Although this sacrifice was particularly painful to him, Spahn decided to offer a seat on the committee of the fraction to his hot-headed opponent. He was exceedingly comfortable there, for, from the day on which Erzberger became one of the leading members of the Centre, there was never a single instance of weakness in his governmentality.

The young member of the Catholic Party has no convictions, but only appetites. A prodigious worker, and gifted with an extraordinary memory, he has been able to make himself redoubtable to the Chancellor through his deep knowledge of the Budget. He is scandalised less than anyone by the inaccuracies he has discovered in it ; but he knows how to make use of them to blackmail the members of the Government. His tactics towards the Chancellor are the very same as those he has employed to overcome the resistance of his file-leaders. “ Beware ! ” he seems to say to those who will not accept his summonses. “ I know a good lot and can cause you the most serious embarrassments.” And, indeed, in questions of detail, he proves himself so well informed and sometimes provokes such stormy debates that, in order to muzzle him on the occasion of more serious business, they grant him everything he wants. When faced by obstinate opposition, this terrible man does not flinch before the worst conflicts. He it was who, in 1906, brought about the dissolution of the Reichstag. Later, he caused the retreat of Secretary of State Dernburg, who, however, had the reputation of being afraid of no one, not even of the Chancellor and the Emperor.

Erzberger aspires (as everyone knows in the Reichstag) to be head of the German Colonial Administration. In the meanwhile, he has taken part in certain business trans-



[London Electrotpe Agency.

HERR MATHIAS ERZBERGER.

*To face p. 108.]*





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actions which have brought him a large fortune. His opponents even contend that he will end in compromising himself in some shady affair or other. Perhaps they are not far out ; for already in the Vereinsbank smash and in that of the real estate agent Jahn the member for the Centre narrowly escaped serious trouble.

I used to go to the Reichstag about eight o'clock every morning to read the newspapers and write my articles. Erzberger got there regularly half an hour later. Alone, at two adjoining tables, we worked away ; and thus I had often an opportunity of conversing with him. Now, this is what he proposed to me one day :

"I am acquainted," he said, "with a plan for the construction of a canal and the establishment of a large commercial port north of Berlin. The land where the works will be executed can be bought for an old song and will increase in value a hundredfold. The purchase, however, must be made rapidly and quietly. Do you know any Parisian capitalists who might place three millions at the disposal of my syndicate ? If the affair comes off, there will be 10,000 marks for you."

"That doesn't interest me," I replied. "Even if you spoke of commission, I shouldn't touch that affair."

Erzberger seemed very surprised at my scruples. Nevertheless, I consented to place him in relations with one of my financial friends. I wanted to discover his methods of procedure. I was lucky. My friend communicated Erzberger's letters to me. They were extremely instructive. The deal did not come off, because the member for the Centre demanded from the Parisian syndicate, before the signing of the contract, a commission of 150,000 marks. I had attained my object. Henceforth I knew my colleague's character.

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Erzberger has no nobility of feeling. He affects rude manners. His coarse laughter is repugnant. How it is that the Chancellor, during the present war, entrusted this big, awkward fellow with the most difficult diplomatic missions I cannot for the life of me understand. At Rome, in that society of the Vatican where diplomacy is conducted so subtly and so discreetly, this fat German must have provoked terror by his manners—those of a peasant of the Danube.

At the time of Erzberger's arrival at the Reichstag, Müller-Fulda guessed that he could make the ambitious young man the instrument of his hatred. He monopolised him. Every morning the two conspirators, standing in the recess of a window of the writing-room, conversed in a low voice, and, judging by the expressions on their faces, one could tell that they were concocting the blackest of plots.

Those who have not assiduously followed, as I have done, the sittings of the Reichstag, at the time when the number of those attending rarely exceeded sixty, have but a very imperfect knowledge of the mechanism of German Parliamentary institutions. Later, after the voting of the Parliamentary indemnity, the lobbies were crowded, and it became more difficult to watch over the manœuvres behind the scenes. Until 1907 everything happened in the family circle and almost in the light of day.

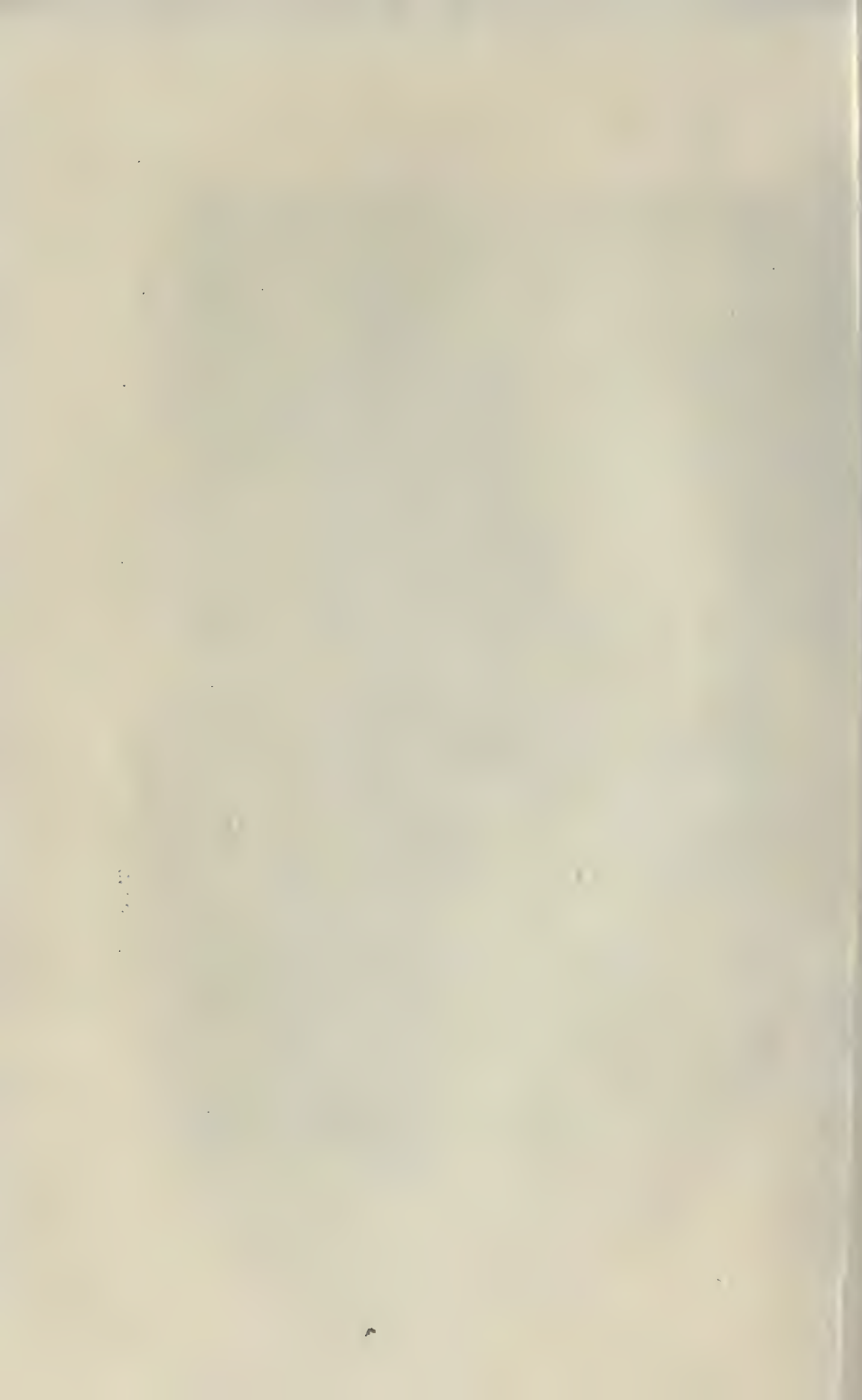
If, at that time, I went so often to Berlin, it was because, as a journalist, I found there the best and surest information. My colleagues of Alsace-Lorraine often joked about what they considered was excessive zeal on my part. And yet those repeated sojourns in an almost deserted Reichstag have rendered me the greatest service by enabling me to penetrate deeper into the German soul.





[*London Electrotyping Agency.*

DR. MICHAELIS (marked with a cross) ADDRESSING THE REICHSTAG.



## MILITARISM IN GERMAN POLITICS

Only once during those years did the Reichstag present a scene of extraordinary animation. The special committee appointed to revise the tariff had with great difficulty come to an understanding. The Bill had got to be passed at a plenary sitting. Now the Right, the Centre, and some of the National-Liberals, desirous above all of protecting German agriculture against the influx of foreign cereals, were in direct and irreducible opposition to the parties of the Left, who were in favour of cheap bread.

The struggle was an epic one. The heads of the fractions had mobilised all their troops. For three days (a spectacle until then unknown) the number of those present reached and even exceeded three hundred. However, as the debates were prolonged there was a falling off in the attendance. During a fortnight, the anxious leaders sent an express messenger every half-hour to the cloak-room to count the hats and see if there was still a quorum.

The Socialists, anticipating the fatigue of the majority, endeavoured to prolong the discussion indefinitely. At each clause of the tariff (and there were more than nine hundred) they delegated to the tribune one of the most verbose and most diffuse of their speakers—Heyne, David, Antrick, or, especially, Stadthagen.

The last-named could easily speak for five hours at a stretch. I recollect seeing him one day in the lobbies, sitting at a table on which lay innumerable sheets of a transcript of the shorthand notes of his speech—a transcript which he had to correct hastily.

"A just punishment," I remarked to him, "for having bored us during half the sitting."

Stadthagen's faun-like face lit up with a broad smile.

"You don't know all, my dear colleague," he replied. "Did you notice that when I ascended to the tribune I



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had a huge pile of books under my arm? It happened that I borrowed a series of long quotations from them. Now, when a speaker begins to read, our stenographers point their pencils towards the sky, after writing the fatal word *inseratur*. But for the life of me I cannot find the quotations I made at hazard!"

When a clause of a Bill under discussion no longer permitted the debates to be dragged out, the Socialists asked to speak on the application of the rules. We then had to submit to endless speeches on the insufficient heating of the House, or on the draughts which made it uninhabitable.

Heyne, who had not the reputation, however, of being a disagreeable joker, spent an hour counting the doors of the House. We became furious.

The Socialists imagined still another trick for retarding the decisive votes. For each clause of the Bill, as for each of the amendments they presented, they demanded the nominal vote. Now, at that time, this vote was taken by the secretaries calling out the names of the members, who replied by a "Yes" or a "No." Before resuming the debates, it was necessary to have a recapitulation. Thirty-five to forty minutes were wasted over this.

In order to put a stop to this obstruction, the rules had to be changed. Since then the nominal vote is taken by means of different coloured voting papers (white: yes; red: no; blue: abstention). Moreover, it was decided that the speeches calling for an application of the rules must not exceed five minutes. Three days more were lost in getting these modifications voted.

At last, to put an end to the situation, Kardorff proposed the adoption in the lump of the five hundred clauses which

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had not yet been voted. This motion brought about a veritable storm. Singer was expelled for having tried to force his way into the tribune. A very little more and they would have come to blows. The leaders of the groups grew very anxious. It became more and more difficult to maintain the number of those attending, the amateur deputies refusing to stay in Berlin merely to attend irritating and sterile debates. So it was decided to sit in permanence. It was a Saturday. The sitting opened at nine a.m. It ended the next morning at four. At seven p.m. food and drink gave out.

For this last battle they had succeeded in assembling nearly three hundred members. Now, the instructions they had received were peremptory. Nobody was to leave the Reichstag, not even for an hour, for the Socialists might at any moment demand a nominal vote. There were, in fact, eighty of these nominal votes during the day. At four in the afternoon the Socialist Antrick mounted into the tribune. He was still there at midnight. In order to keep up his strength, his colleagues brought him grog after grog, in which the yolks of eggs had been beaten up. Every quarter of an hour the speaker closed his portfolios and uttered a few phrases intended merely for effect and which led the members of the Executive to believe that he was about to conclude his speech. Immediately the division bell sounded throughout the Palace, whereupon there was a wild rush of members who feared they would arrive too late to vote. I must confess that that night I had, for the first time in my life, thoughts of murder.

At last, at four a.m., the final vote took place, amidst the prolonged cheering of the Right and the hooting of the Left. Before going home to take our well-earned rest,

## BEHIND THE SCENES IN THE REICHSTAG

twenty of us went to the Chapel of the Sisters of St. Charles to attend Mass. Now, I was destined not to sleep that day. For at seven o'clock, just as I was beginning to drop off, there came a loud knock at my door. It was one of the little boy attendants of the hotel, who, thinking he would please me, had come with the special editions of the newspapers announcing the great news. I came near to strangling the poor little fellow.

The next day the Reichstag assumed once more its dreary and abandoned appearance. It was not full again until the time came for the debates on colonial policy which, in 1906, brought about the dissolution of the Assembly. These dissolutions were periodical. Bismarck had recourse to them thrice when Parliament refused to grant him military credits. The German people, however, always sent him back majorities that were more supple. Let those who try to establish an arbitrary distinction between the German nation and those who govern it kindly remember that fact. Dernburg was, in his turn, to triumph in 1906 over the opposition of Erzberger. The Centre and the parties of the Left were again decimated, whilst the Conservatives and the National-Liberals saw the number of their seats increase in an unhoped-for fashion.

German Chancellors readily make use of the threat of a dissolution. How many times I have heard said in the lobbies, "Prince von Bülow (or Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg) arrived a short time ago carrying the red portfolio (*die rothe Mappe*) under his arm." This portfolio is reserved for Imperial decrees. Generally, it needed nothing more to bring the opposition to an agreement. I am even very much inclined to think that, very often, the party leaders, whose compromises had not met with the approval



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of their colleagues, made use, in accord with the Chancellor, of the expedient of the red portfolio to overcome the last resistance of their respective fractions. The dissolution of the Reichstag always, indeed, brings about a considerable change in the composition of the House. After my sixteen years in Berlin, I was one of the hundred or so deputies whose mandates had been constantly renewed. At the opening of each legislature we found ourselves in the company of 150 to 200 new colleagues, mere supernumeraries for the most part, for very few among them succeeded in penetrating the directing committees of their party on which the immovables, or "immortals," sat.

Twice I heard the Chancellor ask to speak at the opening of the sitting and pronounce the decisive formula, "I am ordered to communicate to the Assembly an important message from His Majesty." And in the midst of the most impressive silence, the highest official of the Empire announced to us that the Reichstag no longer existed.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE EMPEROR AND PARLIAMENT

William II—Prince von Bülow.

At the end of each legislature the President called for cheers for the Emperor. Formerly the Socialists remained in their seats, whilst the majority uttered the three formidable "Hochs!" which emphasised its loyalty. Every time this silent demonstration on the part of the Extreme Left provoked indignant protests from the Conservatives. Later, the Socialists showed themselves more accommodating. Like the members for Alsace-Lorraine, they left the House when the psychological moment came. The President's complaisance even went to the extent of a motion with his head in order to avoid giving them a painful surprise. In 1911 a few Socialists did better. They remained in the House and rose from their seats. Did they join in the "Hoch! Hoch! Hoch!" of the other parties? I was never able to find out. Again, the successive attitudes of the Extreme Left as regards this question of etiquette clearly show the evolution of a party which formerly called itself Republican, but which, since the beginning of the war, has declared itself decidedly Monarchical.

## THE EMPEROR AND PARLIAMENT

A curious incident will also show us to what an extent the Imperial Parliament was lacking in energy. A certain disagreement had arisen between the Government and the majority *à propos* of a Colonial credit. At that time the Rhenish manufacturer Stumm belonged to the Reichstag, where he played the part of the man behind the Chancellor. Indeed Stumm, who was often received by the Emperor, was regarded as the inspirer of the reactionary policy of Prussia. Now, whilst the Parliamentary battle was at its height in the lobbies, Stumm, on his return from the Imperial Palace, informed us that William II, furious at the opposition to the Bill, had said to him, speaking of the Imperial Parliament, "I will crush this herd of swine" ("*diese Schweinebande*"). Elsewhere, this vulgar insult would have provoked a revolt. But at the Reichstag it produced an assuaging effect. A few Independents of the Left doubtless considered that the Emperor had gone too far; but the other members, fearing a serious conflict, hastened to give satisfaction to the irritated Sovereign.

Several times, in 1902 and 1903, I met the Emperor in the Thiergarten, walking rapidly in the most frequented alleys with an orderly officer. It did not look as though special steps had been taken to watch over the Sovereign's safety. The Kaiser stared with his hard eyes at the promenaders whom he met and responded to their respectful salutations by negligently raising two fingers to his white cap.

Later, William II decided to give up these walks. He no longer went through the parks and along the streets of Berlin except in a motor-car. As soon as the Emperor's yellow carriage was signalled, policemen stopped the traffic and forced the passers-by to get on to the foot pavements. The car passed at a speed of forty miles an hour



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in the midst of a crowd which caught but a glimpse of the cowardly monarch.

William II is, in fact, haunted by the fear of death. As soon as any person about him feels the slightest uneasiness, he or she is immediately removed from the Court until completely cured. When, in the course of his numerous journeys, it is reported to the Emperor that cases of infectious disease have been notified in one of the towns he is to visit, the programme of receptions is immediately altered. If the harmful microbes ever reach the Sovereign it will not be through lack of precautions to keep them from him.

Presentation to the Emperor has been proposed to me three times.

"Nothing will please me better," I have replied each time; "but I have a condition to make. I shall tell the Emperor all I have on my mind."

"That is impossible," I was told. "The protocol requires you merely to reply to the questions asked by the Sovereign."

"Very well, in that case I prefer not to be received by him."

The Germans could not for the life of them understand my stubbornness, they who, to have the honour of pressing the hand of their master, would accept in advance the worst insults.

I was well inspired in avoiding any interview with the brutal fellow who presides over the destiny of the German people. Here is the proof. In 1913 the Alsace-Lorraine Parliament decided, in order to show its dissatisfaction over the Zabern affair, to reduce the Statthalter's allowance by half (100,000 marks instead of 200,000). A short time afterwards William II came to Strassburg, and a

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grand reception was organised in his honour in the *salons* of the Secretary of State. Dr. Ricklin was present.

Prince von Wedel had asked the President of the Second Chamber to stand near him, so that he could introduce him to the Emperor. The presentation took place. The Emperor, riding his high horse and staring still harder, exclaimed, in a cutting voice :

“ Ah ! so you are the President of those who have placed my Statthalter on short commons ? See that you do better next year ! ”

Whereupon he turned on his heels. Dr. Ricklin went and complained to Baron von Bulach of this piece of impertinence. The Secretary of State promised to calm the Emperor, and towards the end of the evening attempted to do so.

“ Sire,” he said, “ the President of the Chamber is grieved by the reception you reserved for him. Cannot you say a few kind words to him ? ”

“ Not to-day ! ” replied William II, brutally.

There you have the man in his real colours—the military brute who will accept no contradiction and considers he has a right to lash those whom he thinks are incapable of defending themselves. How different from the amiable, smiling Sovereign whose delightful portraits have been drawn for us by foreign tourists !

The Emperor’s capricious temper was known and feared at the Reichstag. How many times I have heard the members of the Government and the party leaders threaten us with the anger of William II !

With some of his familiars, the German ruler knows, however, how to lay aside all constraint. Two Alsatians had thus won his good graces : Baron von Bulach, son of a Chamberlain of Napoleon III, who was made a Minister

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through an Imperial caprice, and Baron von Schmid, that French quartermaster whom William II promoted, one fine morning, major of a regiment of the Guard, to the great scandal of all the officers.

Both secured the favours of the Sovereign by relating to him those little scandals and stories of the guard-house of which William II is so fond when he consents to lay aside his arrogance.

William II is and will remain an enigma for future historians. The contradictory attitudes of this eternal weathercock are disconcerting. He has been seen to wave, with the same apparent conviction, the torch of war and the olive branch of peace. He seems to be fond of nothing but uniforms and grand military spectacles, until, suddenly, he reveals himself in the character of a humdrum *bourgeois*, desirous above all of transacting a few good business deals.

He cannot keep still. Nature has also afflicted him with an intemperance of language which throws his collaborators into a state of despair. The Imperial busybody knows nothing, studies nothing, and listens to no one. When the Chancellor, or one of his Secretaries of State, comes to read a report, he has not got further than the second sentence before William II interrupts and tries to dazzle him with his foolish theories. Herr von Posadowsky, Secretary of State at the Home Office, a serious and wonderfully well-informed man, used to allow the flood of intemperate language to pass by, and then quietly resume his statement at the point where he had had to leave off. Furious at this, William II used then to amuse himself by making his two fox terriers pass in and out between the Minister's legs, until Posadowsky, weary of this fooling, closed his portfolios and asked permission



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to withdraw. One fine morning, Herr von Posadowsky, whose universal knowledge seemed to fit him for the post held by Prince von Bülow, received a visit from Herr von Valentini, the chief of the Civil Cabinet, who handed him the famous "blue letter" informing statesmen that the hour of their "voluntary" resignation had struck. There was general surprise in the Reichstag. William II's fox terriers alone could have told us the cause of this unexpected disgrace.

Nevertheless, Chancellors knew how to utilise the Sovereign's deambulatory mania and prolixity. Every time that German diplomacy came in contact with serious difficulties, the Emperor was begged to pack his trunks and visit foreign Sovereigns. William II has been seen in almost every capital, where he did his best to captivate the Court, whilst his Minister was baiting advantageous conventions. What would the German Emperor not have given to be able to come to Paris? This was the unrealised dream of his reign. Every time that his advances towards the Government of the Republic were unavailing, William II wreaked his anger on the people of Alsace-Lorraine. Consequently, we feared above everything else those friendly telegrams with which periodically he used to overwhelm French statesmen. We knew beforehand that they would be paid for by us in the form of fresh persecutions.

William II was to find a less complaisant Reichstag during the historic days of November, 1908. But before speaking of that tragic occasion, I will stop to draw the portrait of the man who was the principal actor—Prince von Bülow.

Bernard von Bülow was born under a lucky star. Kind fairies gave him both suppleness of mind and the gift of

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speech. Entering the Diplomatic Service when quite young, he was to meet with nothing but success. Wherever he went—Paris, London, St. Petersburg, and especially Rome—he was fêted, petted, lionised. The German diplomat cut a fine figure, spoke several languages with ease, and exhibited flashes of wit which were repeated right and left. A great reader, he could discourse agreeably on all sorts of subjects—literature, history, political economy, etc. When he entered on politics, he showed himself a past master in the art of saying nothing, whilst giving himself the air of lavishing the most redoubtable confidences.

Prince von Bülow was, moreover, and still is, the most crafty of courtiers. He easily forgets his promises, and breaks his engagements without scruple. Lying, which he always accompanies by a captivating smile, costs him no effort whatsoever. Stupendously ambitious, he will pass over the body of his best friend when his personal interests dictate that inelegant action.

Few men are as vain as he is of their physical charms. As I have said elsewhere, Prince von Bülow is not a handsome man but a pretty woman. One has the impression, when speaking to him, that he is constantly twisting himself about and striving to impart to his attitudes an enveloping grace. There is the same studied elegance in the sonorousness of his bass voice.

Prince von Bülow has a fine bearing. His regular features, however, are lacking in distinction. On the other hand, his blue eyes are very expressive.

Was it owing to his personal allurements that, late in life, he married the Countess of Camporeale, the granddaughter of the Italian Minister Minghetti? Perhaps so. This marriage was profitable to him. Princess von Bülow

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is a very intelligent and prudent woman, whose collaboration has been precious to the German diplomatist. In 1900 Chancellor von Hohenlohe summoned the man who was soon to become William II's "dear Bernard" to the post of Secretary of State at the Foreign Office. A year later Prince von Bülow replaced him in the celebrated Wilhelmstrasse Palace.

The ambitious statesman had succeeded in obtaining Bismarck's old post. Henceforth he strove to surpass even the founder of the Empire.

I cannot resist the temptation of here relating an incident which, though slight, will inform the reader regarding Prince von Bülow's principal defect.

Unless my memory fails me, it happened in 1906. A Parisian journalist, M. de N——, had come to Berlin, and I had had several interviews with him. Now, during his stay in the Prussian capital, a grand reception was announced to be given at the Chancellery. Everybody of note in the aristocratic, literary, artistic, diplomatic and parliamentary worlds of Berlin was to crowd in the official *salons*. M. de N—— expressed to me a desire to attend the *soirée*, where he thought he would be able to collect some precious information. But it was not easy to obtain an invitation for him, because the Parisian journalist had, a short time before, published a somewhat caustic book about William II. However, Prince von Bülow's secretary, Herr von Loebell, now Prussian Minister of the Interior, ended by sending me the little card on which were the simple words "Mme. von Bülow receives on such a day, at 9 p.m."

The Chancellor gave a hearty welcome to my companion. He even showed his kindness to the extent of taking him into Bismarck's study, where he showed him the pen with



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which his predecessor had signed the Treaty of Frankfort ! The politest German will display these sudden awakenings of ancestral savagery.

On returning to Paris, M. de N—— published in a big morning newspaper three articles, in which, in most eulogistic terms, he wrote about Prince von Bülow and his guests. Now, a few days later, when in the lobbies of the Reichstag, I happened to meet Prince von Aremberg, who almost every evening played whist with the Chancellor.

The Prince stopped me and without preamble said :

“Your Parisian friend is a blackguard. The Chancellor is furious.”

“How is that ?” I replied. “I’ve read the articles and they are so amiable that I’m surprised a Parisian journal published them.”

“Amiable ?” cried the Prince. “Look here ! Just you read this passage which Prince von Bülow himself has underlined with a blue pencil.”

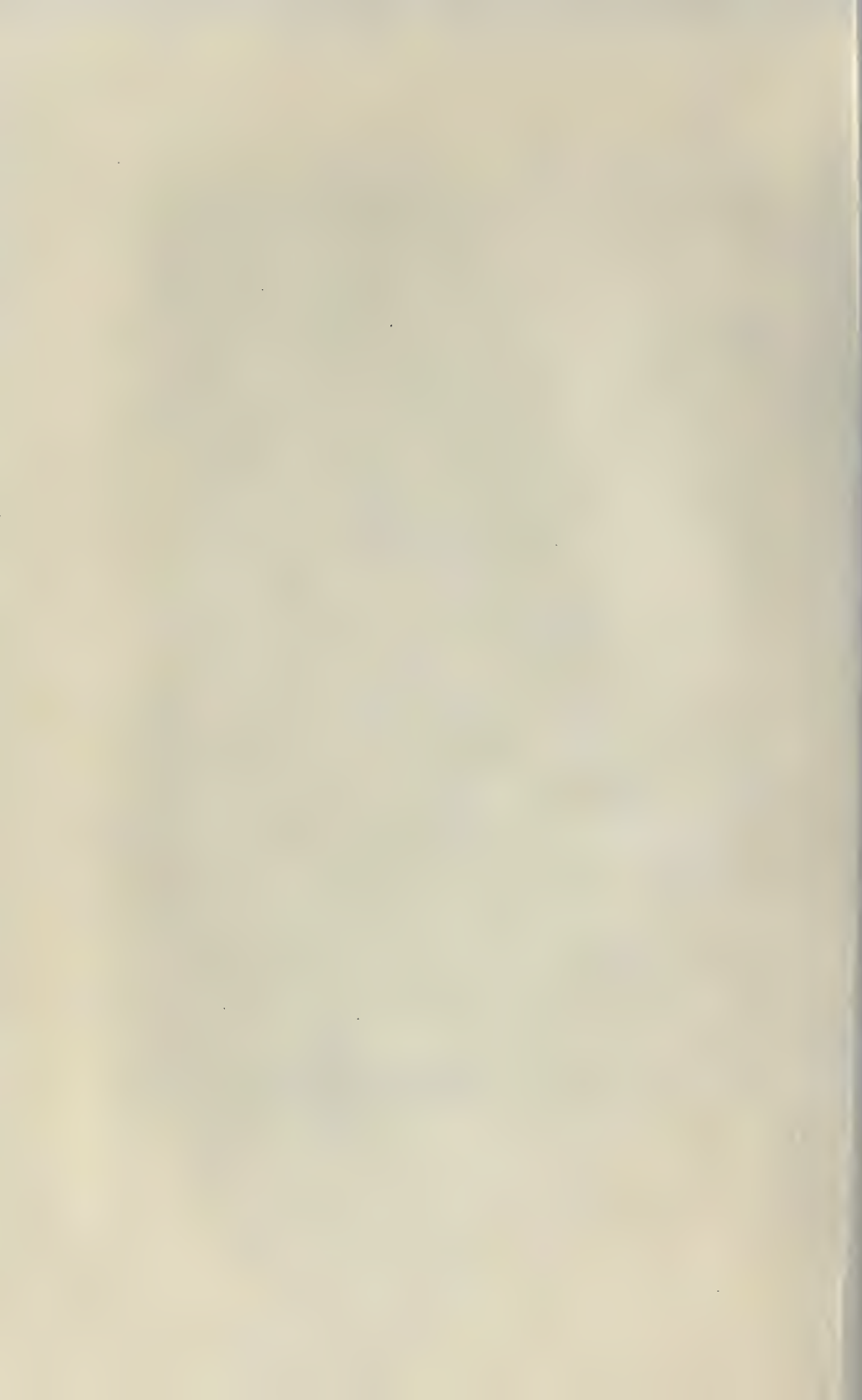
The passage in question merely consisted of these few words, “Prince von Bülow has an ordinary head.”

The French journalist had touched the German statesman on his tenderest spot—his vanity, that of a faded beau.

We should be wrong, however, in concluding that Prince von Bülow did not seek other successes. As Chancellor of the Empire he wished to govern effectively, and at the same time he aspired to give his country the hegemony of the universe. To be the head of the first State in the world, such was the foolish plan which this proud man had dreamed of realising. It was under the government of Prince von Bülow that Pan-Germanism, openly or hypocritically encouraged by him, was able to



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PRINCE VON BÜLOW.





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develop freely and bring all the public authorities under its domination. All the foreign representatives accredited to the German Government know the stereotyped argument which the occupant of the Wilhelmstrasse urged against them.

"Ah! yes, Herr Ambassador. I was quite ready to make you such-and-such a concession, but, when reading the newspapers, you must yourself have been convinced of the impossibility, situated as I am, of keeping my promises. Public opinion would not tolerate it."

A nice excuse! This public opinion was the Chancellor himself, who had formed it by the *communiqués* from his Press Bureau.

Prince von Bülow was not always free, however, to act as he pleased. He had a suspicious master. William II is disconcerting. All who have striven to study him have had to abandon the task of penetrating the mystery of his psychology. Capricious, always acting on the spur of the moment, profoundly convinced of the almost divine character of his mission, sometimes seized with strange scruples, and then suddenly allowing himself to be led to the worst excesses through his headstrong temperament, he exacts from his co-workers a blind submission to his eternal caprices.

Prince von Bülow was not the man to accept this servitude. For a long time he succeeded, by amusing him, in suggesting his ideas to the Emperor. Serious difficulties, however, were created for him through William II's intemperate language, which became almost morbid. Never able to remain long in one place, delivering solemn speeches wherever he went, in German towns as well as in foreign capitals, intoxicating himself with his own words to such an extent that he sometimes made the most compromising

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declarations, convinced that he knew everything, whereas he would not consent to learn anything, the Emperor, in his oratorical demonstrations and in his private conversations with foreign leaders and statesmen, indulged in the wildest fancies. This jack-of-all-trades who presided over the destiny of the German Empire not only imagined that he was a painter, a sculptor, an art critic, and a remarkable musician, he also thought that he could compete with Demosthenes and Cicero. His political speeches and sermons (for every year, during his cruises in the North Sea, William II preached on Sundays before the crew of his yacht) have been published in volume form.

Prince von Bülow was furious at being unable to dam the threatening flood of Imperial eloquence. The legitimate emotion provoked by the publication in the *Daily Telegraph* of an interview in which William II gave an appreciation in disagreeable terms of England's policy furnished the Chancellor with an opportunity of bringing his master to reason.

There was an interpellation in the Reichstag. The proceedings lasted three days. Never had the tribune of the Imperial Parliament enjoyed such liberties. Theoretically, the Sovereign's person must never be discussed in Germany. But during those celebrated days high treason was committed dozens and scores of times by members of all parties, even those of the Right. The most indulgent speakers pleaded extenuating circumstances and vaguely hinted that, in their opinion, the Emperor was not responsible because he was of unbalanced mind.

Sunk in his seat, Prince von Bülow, with distressed face and wrinkled brow, his blue eyes fixed on the ceiling and his hands raised, every now and then, to make a disheartened gesture, was a living statue of sorrow. He allowed,

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however, the torrent of insults poured on the Sovereign to pass without protesting. A consummate actor, he assumed the attitude of a victim resigned to the worst sacrifices. And yet we all knew that at the top of the Imperial manuscript he had placed the sign that he had read it and approved.

The proud master of the Wilhelmstrasse, outrageously ambitious and basely cunning, imagined that, thanks to the most hypocritical and dishonest of manœuvres, he had succeeded in assuring for himself, henceforth, undisputed power. But when, on the third day, he rose in the midst of impressive silence, it was in an almost languid voice that he made the long expected declaration, "I have seen His Majesty. I have obtained from him the promise that henceforth he will show the greatest reserve." The whole Reichstag applauded. Prince von Bülow had not the least idea at that moment that he had just signed his death warrant.

In the lobbies, the Chancellor's friends gave circumstantial details regarding the interview between the Chancellor and the Sovereign. The discussion had been a stormy one and Prince von Bülow had several times offered his resignation. On leaving his master, he was pale and almost faltering. And in the eyes of all the members of the Reichstag the statesman who had had the courage to affront the Imperial anger grew beyond all measure; he became the national hero, the man who, by an audacious gesture, had restored the reign of democracy in Germany and was preparing to endow Prussia with a new constitutional *régime*.

During the weeks that followed, William II, the wandering Emperor, *der Reisekaiser*, as he had been jokingly baptized, did not leave Berlin, and the echo of none of



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his conversations appeared in the Press. It was known that, at long intervals, "dear Bernard" still went to the Palace to report the progress of affairs to the Emperor, and that, during these short audiences, the Emperor had not opened his mouth. Prince von Bülow, proud of the result obtained, had recovered his good humour and continued to enjoy his increasing popularity. Alas! the Chancellor knew his master very badly. William II never pardons a personal insult. Still less is he the man to support a tutelage. He had bent his back to the storm, but, cunning and obstinate, he awaited the hour of vengeance. It was soon to strike.

The finances of the Empire were in a bad state. Prince von Bülow, a Pan-German and determined to prepare for the great war of conquests, had opened the most ruinous credits for the General Staff of the Army. The annual deficit of the Empire reached 500 million marks. The Chancellor had indeed tried to meet this by means of loans, but these barely covered it. Nothing remained to be done, therefore, but to create fresh taxes.

Now, the Left claimed, contrary to the constant tradition and also to the spirit as well as the letter of the Constitution, that the necessary resources should be obtained by means of direct taxes, which are reserved for particular States. The Right and the Centre, as also the Federal Council, were in favour of increasing the indirect taxes—those on beer, alcohol, matches, railway tickets, way-bills, etc. A formidable struggle commenced. Prince von Bülow, faced by the opposition of the Socialists and the Democrats, whom he had, however, domesticated, wished to retire. William II refused to accept his resignation before the Reichstag had improved the finances of the

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Empire. The Chancellor was forced, therefore, to accept the proposals of the Conservatives. The day after their triumph, when the whole Left was overwhelming its former idol with insults, the Emperor, who at last had vengeance within his grasp, allowed the Chancellor to collapse in the midst of the general scorn. He had imposed on himself for six months the promised "reserve," but his triumph appeared only the more brilliant. From the day after his "dear Bernard's" sensational fall, William II, more talkative than ever, resumed the series of his noisy and pompous changes from place to place, whilst the ex-Dictator, with embittered heart, went to hide his vexation in the Villa des Roses at Rome.

Prince von Bülow, on leaving office, did not say, like Bismarck, "The King will see me again"; but, more skilful than the Iron Chancellor, he took good care not to set up a noisy opposition to the new *régime*. The courtiers whom he retained in misfortune have related to us that the disabused statesman spent his time in the Eternal City re-reading good authors, and that his serene soul henceforth soared very high above the wretched contingencies of politics. Nothing of the sort! The ex-Chancellor was biding his time. He thought it had come when, at the beginning of the war, he was entrusted with the task of maintaining the neutrality of Italy. Notwithstanding his failure, he hopes that his chance will still come on the day when Germany, forced to negotiate with the victorious Allies, will be obliged to have recourse to his undoubted diplomatic ability, and on the day when, compelled to rid itself of the dynasty of prey, Prussia will seek for its first President of the Republic. Like William II, Prince von Bülow harbours and protracts his hatred. His revenge will only be complete on the day

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he enters as a master into that Palace whence the Emperor drove him like a valet.

Did the fourth Chancellor of the Empire intend, as has been claimed, to bestow a parliamentary *régime* on Germany? I have never believed it. By birth, education, and temperament he belongs to the caste of the Junkers. He had, however, the supreme skill to give the opponents of the autocracy the illusion of a Liberalism which was absolutely foreign to him. Above all, anxious to win over the parties of the Left to his imperialistic policy, he incessantly made deceitful advances towards them. A few concessions as regards details sustained the confidence of men who, deprived until then of all honours and all the advantages of power, threw themselves greedily on the crumbs that fell from the Governmental table. Whereas, formerly, the doors of the Wilhelmstrasse Palace had been strictly closed to Democratic members, Prince von Bülow showed himself most accessible to his recent opponents. Picture to yourself the pride with which the chests of these pariahs were inflated when the little Bavarian magistrate, Müller-Meiningen and his former stenographer at the Reichstag, stout Wiemer, were received like friends by the all-powerful Chancellor. Prodigal of his smiles, his friendly slaps, and his words of affection, von Bülow spent his time in passing golden chains around the necks of his predecessors' most determined adversaries. How they laughed in the lobbies of the Reichstag to see the former bullies of the Democracy transform themselves into Court dandies!

The Chancellor always used the same language to his new friends. "At heart I am with you. Prussia and the Empire must be democratised. But we cannot succeed in doing that at a single stroke. We are suffocated within



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our frontiers. Our industries are suffering from a crisis which is getting worse and worse. Our finances are in a rotten condition. Above all things, let us create a Greater Germany. The exactions of the Agrarians and the arrogance of the officers are insupportable, and I desire, as much as you do, to free Germany from them. But our army is the wonderful instrument which will enable us to dominate the world and place the wealth of our Fatherland on the broadest bases. This would be a badly chosen time to break or even to blunt the sword which will give us the decisive victory. Therefore be patient. Second me in the final efforts I am making to assure our world domination. The day after victory, when the people, by their sacrifices, have merited liberation from an ancient servitude, I shall be there to proclaim, with you, the necessity of immediately granting the widest liberties to the nation."

There is, moreover, one of Prince von Bülow's phrases which all foreign politicians ought to remember every time they are obliged to negotiate with a German diplomatist. Here it is, in all its splendid effrontery :

"As far as I am concerned, I have never seen the dark side of the reproach that I have broken political principles ; I have even, at times, regarded it as a eulogy. For I recognise in it the confession that the reason of State is my only compass."

Do not confuse this monstrous declaration with the well-known saying, "Only fools never change their opinion." As a matter of fact, a thoughtful mind may, without loss of prestige, recognise that it has been mistaken. But there is a great difference between this logical evolution of thought and the shameful principle in conformity with which momentary interests permit one to trample

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all principles underfoot. The theory of the "scrap of paper" and "necessity knows no law" is to be found in its entirety in Prince von Bülow's horrible dictum. Prussians, fortunately, sometimes give way to these outbursts of sincerity when they believe they are certain of success. And yet what nation has ever made so great an abuse of virtuous verbalism?

One of Prince von Bülow's favourite sayings was as follows :

"When you go in for politics, you must have the skin of a rhinoceros."

Sometimes the rhinoceros's skin became that of an elephant. The elegant occupant of the Wilhelmstrasse meant by this that he was indifferent to the most violent attacks. He exaggerated, for no statesman was ever more sensitive, not only to a censure, the grounds of which were stated, but also to friendly criticism. As regards this he is to be distinguished from his successor, who really possesses "the skin of a rhinoceros."

## CHAPTER IX

### THE GROWTH OF IMPERIALISM

Von Bethmann-Hollweg—The Evolution of the Socialists—Winterer and Preiss, the Deputies for Alsace-Lorraine—Delsor and Hauss—Dr. Ricklin and Vonderscheer—Grégoire and Charles de Wendel.

HERR VON BETHMANN-HOLLWEG's appointment to the post of Chancellor came as a surprise to everybody. Nothing seemed to have prepared for such a high position the official whose absolute insignificance the Reichstag had already many times been able to appreciate.

Picture to yourself a tall, well-made, but thin man who does not know what to do with his long arms and legs—a man whose bony, bearded face is without expression, whose eyes, buried in two deep sockets, always have the same anxious look, and whose thick and pendulous lower lip still further accentuates his disconcerting appearance. There you have Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg. A mediocre speaker, who, in a monotonous voice and with heavy gestures, often employs most ludicrous phrases, the fifth Chancellor of the Empire is most certainly deprived of everything which contributed to the seductive charm of his predecessor. On seeing him, during the sittings of the Reichstag, buried in his chair, with his eyes fixed on the ceiling and his whole attitude expressive of profound



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boredom, you would take him for a perfect idiot. He is but a poor creature without will-power, entrusted, through a caprice of his Imperial master, with duties that are too heavy and too complicated for him.

I knew him as a mere Under-Secretary of State at the Home Office. In those days nobody paid the least attention to this obscure co-worker with Herr von Posadowsky. When the latter received from the hands of Herr von Valentini the blue letter calling upon him to resign, Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg became his successor.

"Bethmann-Hollweg? Who is he?" people asked in the lobbies of the Reichstag, on hearing the news.

"The insignificant—very insignificant—substitute for a man of great value," replied a few intimates.

And, indeed, when, *à propos* of the home Budget, the interminable discussions on social politics were resumed, one could clearly see how dryly bureaucratic the eloquence of the new Secretary of State was.

I have retained an amusing recollection of that period. It was in 1906, and the constitutional reform of Alsace-Lorraine was once more being discussed in the Reichstag. During a speech by the Socialist Deputy Emmel, Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg, near whom I was, made the following remark in an undertone:—

"If only, before asking us for anything, you would agree among yourselves!"

"This is a bad time, Excellency, to discuss that question," I replied. "If you will allow me, I will call to-morrow morning at the Wilhelmstrasse."

"All right! I will receive you at ten o'clock."

I was there to the minute on the following day. Our interview lasted an hour and a half and was a stormy one. At one moment Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg said to me:

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“ You demand a Republican Constitution. That is impossible. The German Princes will never consent to establish a Republic, and that in the Marches of the West.”

“ What can you expect, Excellency,” I replied. “ We have no dynastic attachment, and I don’t see how we can create one ; and so much the more so because, as my colleague Groeber said a week ago, we should be obliged, if that came about, to ‘ swallow ’ (*herunterschlucken*) a Prussian Prince.”

Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg, surprised by this unexpected remark, blurted out :

“ Groeber was right. Ah ! if only Prince August was ten years older.”

He had confessed. Prussia counted on making Alsace-Lorraine the appanage for one of the sons of William II. The Emperor had even already decided to grant our country to his fourth son. I did not expect to hear so much as this. Moreover, the naïveté with which the confidence was made proves that Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg was completely destitute of the most elementary prudence.

When the question of Prince von Bülow’s successor came up, deputies and journalists took part for several days in the game of trying to guess who it was to be. Many names were mentioned. But that of Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg never entered the head of a single person. When people heard that William II, after long hesitations, had fixed his choice on the least brilliant of bureaucrats, there was first of all stupor and then indignation in political circles. It was quite obvious that the Emperor wished to become his own Chancellor again. “ Dear Bernard ” had tried to play the part of a Mayor of the Palace. The boss intended to substitute for that cumbrous personage a simple copying clerk.

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Moreover, the new Imperial Minister was fully to justify his master's confidence. Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg is not a bad man ; he has even a substratum of honesty which is surprising in the case of a Prussian. Above all, however, he is a faithful servant. The master commands and he obeys his orders without a murmur, without listening to the voice of his conscience. Sometimes, perhaps, he raises a timid objection. But if the Emperor persists in his judgment, the Chancellor bows to it and, with an accent of the most profound conviction, upholds before Parliament a point of view which, left to himself, he would have condemned. He is indifferent either to the opinion of Parliament or to that of the people. He will calmly say :

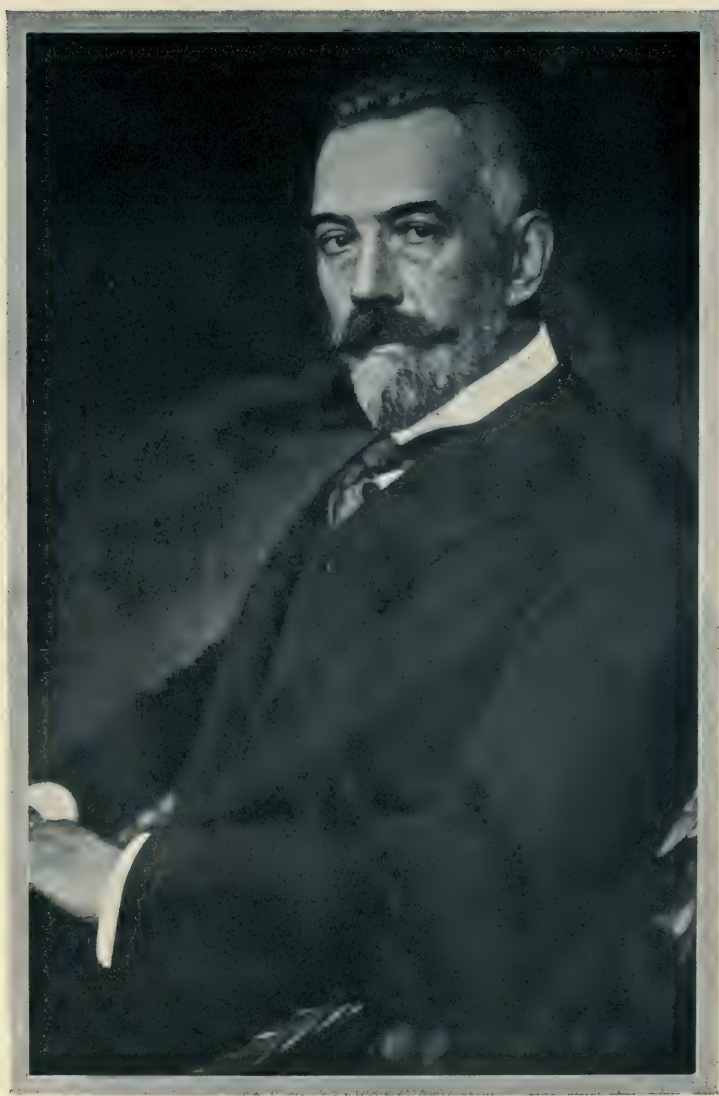
“ Put me in a minority, if it so please you ; I shall remain all the same at my post as long as I retain the confidence of my Sovereign.”

The whole of German parliamentary life is summed up in this brutal sally.

During recent years, the Socialists of the Reichstag had become the best supporters of the imperialism of Prince von Bülow and his successor. Events have proved it. Long and attentively have I followed their evolution. After the death of Liebknecht and Singer, Bebel, henceforth left behind by the self-seekers of his party, had himself abandoned his old intransigent opposition. Bernstein, Heyne, Sudekum, Scheidemann, and David had become masters of the parliamentary fraction and were themselves coming under the ascendancy of Legien.

The last named, president of the German professional workers' syndicates, was the type of the Possibilist. Formerly the proletariat on the other side of the Rhine had had faith in the social revolution in that marvellous future





[*London Electrotpe Agency.*

HERR VON BETHMANN-HOLLWEG.

*To face p. 136.]*



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State the prodigious equality of which the pontiffs of complete collectivism had flashed before its eyes. Then, seeing nothing come, but noting on the other hand that the mirage grew fainter every day, in the midst of a materialistic society in which the exigencies of capitalism grew inordinately, the workman had come to wish for immediate realisations. Little by little, he had thus detached himself from pure politics in order to fall back on social legislation which certain *bourgeois* parties endeavoured to develop methodically but without excessive haste. From that time the seats of doctrinarian Socialists were in danger. Legien, who had them at his disposal, thanks to his powerful syndicates, demanded of his colleagues of the Extreme Left that they should cease their systematic and sterile opposition, to enter on the path of progressive amelioration of the lot of the workers. The Socialists formerly rejected all social Bills on the pretext that they were insufficient. The Syndicalists forced them to vote for them every time that these Bills represented a real progress. It was thus that, at the time of the last reform of the workers' insurance, the Extreme Left, for the first time, added its votes to those of the Democrats, the National-Liberals, and the Centre.

From that time Parliamentary Socialism renounced the doctrine of Karl Marx and became a party of reform like the others. One thing leading to another, it transformed itself, if not into a governmental party, at least into a party of government. In the Grand Duchy of Baden, in Wurtemberg, and in Bavaria the fraction of the Extreme Left was seen to vote in favour of the Budget. Frank ventured to attend the Court receptions. When the constitutional reform of Alsace-Lorraine came before the Reichstag in 1911, the whole of the Socialist fraction



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voted for the Governmental Bill, the first clause of which said, "Sovereign power is exercised in the Reichsland by the German Emperor." In 1913, opposition to the formidable increase in the peace effectives of the army was very faintly indicated by the Parliamentary Socialists, who afterwards enthusiastically adopted the thousand millions of extraordinary taxes on wealth which made that increase realisable. All these concessions of principles were, moreover, consented to without any compensation. The Right continued to dominate the Imperial Parliament and the Prussian Government remained fiercely reactionary. The Socialists nevertheless underwent the growing influence of militant Pan-Germanism.

Since 1906 we could no longer make our complaints, as before, from the tribune of the Imperial Parliament without provoking protests from the parties of the Left as well as those of the Centre and the Right. The Poles and the Danes were in the same box. Whereas, formerly, we always had a majority when we demanded the abolition of our exceptional laws and the extension of our public liberties, the whole Reichstag now rose against claims which it considered excessive and treated us as enemies of the Empire.

This was especially the case when there disappeared one devoted friend we had in the ranks of the Socialist Party, the Bavarian Deputy von Vollmar. This tall, thin man with a long, angular head and a little pointed beard, like that of Napoleon III, was a curious figure. A former pontifical Zouave, von Vollmar had been wounded in the heel during the war of 1870, and they had never been able to extract the bullet, which caused him much pain. He walked but painfully, leaning on a stick. The frock-coat which he wore buttoned up to the chin gave

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him the appearance of one of the officers on half-pay of the Restoration. Of very independent mind, speaking with some difficulty, but with much appositeness and a deep knowledge of the subjects he handled, the Bavarian Deputy was listened to very attentively in the Reichstag, especially when he spoke on foreign affairs.

A very wealthy Swedish lady (it was related that she possessed two millions) became enraptured with the expontifical Zouave and married him. Now, it happened that since the Franco-Prussian War, von Vollmar received a pension of 2,000 marks from the Emperor's private purse. When, through his marriage, he became rich, he was discreetly invited to abandon his income.

"God forbid!" he replied. "Henceforth I shall hand my pension over to the party funds, where it will represent the Imperial subscription."

On this occasion von Vollmar showed himself more generous than Bebel, who, having inherited half a million from an officer, an admirer, kept the greater part of this royal gift for himself. We know that when the ex-workman cabinetmaker died he left a fortune of more than 900,000 marks to his son, a doctor in Switzerland. The Collectivists never pardoned their great leader for this infidelity to the sacred doctrine. It is true that capitalists are numerous among them and almost always respected.

My Alsace-Lorraine colleagues in the Reichstag formed an interesting group. After the voluntary departure of Canons Guerber and Simonis, M. Winterer became the *doyen* of our little fraction. His was a fine and beautiful figure. The *curé* of St. Etienne at Mülhausen had been elected for the first time in 1874 for the constituency of Altkirch-Thann. Since then, his electors had remained

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constantly faithful to him. In Canon Winterer's heart was one passionate affection—that for France, and one deep hatred—that for Socialism. At a time when nobody yet attached importance to the theories of Marxism, he had grasped their danger and, in books which are still read with profit, had attempted to refute them scientifically.

Winterer had not a transcendent mind, but he was an indefatigable worker. He required a good deal of time and reflection to establish his convictions, but when he had acquired them nothing could ever shake them. He stuck to his ideas in a direct ratio to the difficulty their assimilation had given him. Intercourse with him was not always easy ; but the authority he enjoyed, and which was explained by his sincerity and application, as well as the dignity of his life, was enormous.

In his attachment to the lost provinces he never gave way. The Germans knew that he was their irreconcilable enemy. In Berlin, as well as in Strassburg, Winterer was the soul of a deliberate resistance, moderate in appearance, but of inflexible energy. His speeches, which were very elaborate (the member for Altkirch never improvised), always produced a profound emotion, which was still further increased by the speaker's venerable aspect and the penetrating tone of his voice.

Jacques Preiss was quite different. A lawyer of great ability and a remarkable polemist, speaking and writing the German language admirably, the member for Colmar gave, when in the tribune, the impression of being a powerful adversary. His arguments descended on the heads of his opponents like the blows of a sledge-hammer. The speech on the Dictatorship delivered by Preiss in 1894 in the Reichstag marked the first awakening of public opinion in Alsace-Lorraine, after the period of the



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hardest persecutions. On hearing that splendid trumpet blast, the people of the annexed provinces recovered consciousness of their rights, as Spiess's election was to prove two years later. What Preiss so well called "the cemetery peace" was at an end.

Few men were so popular as the member for Colmar during the years that followed. His name became a flag. And only rightly so, for Preiss, devoid of all ambition, had never once shown a sign of weakness. A few months before the opening of the war he showed me, with a certain pride, the extremely rare pamphlet in which, when a young student, he had already traced the political programme which was to be that of his whole life.

A good-humoured man and a most sure friend, he was held in general esteem. The Germans themselves respected an enemy whose disinterestedness they knew through having tried in vain on several occasions to buy his co-operation.

A Protestant, or rather a Freethinker, whose temperament led him to combat all religious symbols, "our Jacques," as he was called, nevertheless extolled that sacred union of which he was one of the principal founders in Alsace-Lorraine. Catholic electors constantly showed their gratitude to him on that account, whereas the "Liberals" would never pardon him.

Of medium height, with a well-knit frame, although he was afflicted with a slight stoutness, possessing an energetic face intersected by a slender moustache, and an animated look behind the double eye-glass constantly fixed on his small nose, Preiss spoke little, but listened and reflected a good deal. It was only after a good meal, copiously washed down by generous wines, that he let himself go. His sprightliness was then unbounding.

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He gained an important position in the Reichstag. On the benches of the Democrats and of the Centre he counted only friends. His interventions in the tribune always produced the greatest effect.

The Abbé Delsor is and was always a bundle of nerves. First of all a teacher in France and professor at the little episcopal seminary of Strassburg, he afterwards became, after a short stay at Colmar, as curate of St. Martin's, *curé* of a little village in Lower Alsace. Possessing superior intelligence, writing French and the Alsatian dialect perfectly, he experienced the glories of fame when quite young. His chats in dialect, signed "The Old Pontoneer," had a prodigious success in the *Union d'Alsace-Lorraine*, and largely contributed to sustain the spirit of national opposition among the population of the annexed provinces. Later, when the *Union* was suppressed, Delsor took over the management of the *Revue catholique d'Alsace-Lorraine*, the brilliant monthly articles of which placed him in the front rank of the gallant defenders of our liberties. Delsor has a caustic manner. His sentences are clear, precise, trenchant, and abound in similes. Unfortunately, this incomparable writer has no definite political doctrine. He does not live on an acquired basis of classified knowledge, but from day to day on his impressions of the moment.

Here is an instance. In 1906 the Reichstag was discussing the American Meat Importation Bill. The German market was flooded with suspicious products, the preparation of which was not sufficiently controlled in the ports of departure. Numerous cases of poisoning had been reported through the consumption of sausages and fats coming from the United States.

German producers, whose cattle was insufficiently

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protected against this disastrous competition, had demanded that the authorities should allow only animals that had been slaughtered in large houses, where they could be easily examined by the Customs, to be imported from America.

Representing an almost exclusively agricultural population, the Abbé Delsor's duty was to support the Governmental Bill. But whilst on his way to Berlin he read an article by Le Play on cheap living. When he reached the Reichstag, he declared to Hauss and myself that he was going to ask to speak in favour of complete liberty as regards importation. The more we strove to combat his ideas the more obstinate he became in defending them. Our discussion assumed such proportions that Hauss ended by saying to Delsor, "Very well! Deliver your speech in your own name. I shall afterwards ask to speak in the name of my group, to uphold the opposite point of view."

During the whole discussion, Delsor, who had had his name put down to speak, stood at the foot of the tribune. He was visibly annoyed. When his turn came to speak he delivered a splendid speech in favour of Protection! Hauss very nearly embraced him when, smiling, he returned to his seat.

How can one explain this strange receptivity? Delsor, who is a very brilliant talker and naturally inclined towards contradiction, lives a good deal out of doors. He talks more than he studies. Hence a natural tendency to return in his articles to the often contradictory ideas which his long and numerous conversations with people of all classes have brought forth in his mind.

We were constantly obliged to watch over him, to take him aside and catechise him, in order to avoid the danger



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of his bolting. This lack of moderation served him an ill turn in 1891. In one of his "Reviews of the Month" he allowed himself to write an unfortunate sentence regarding Protestantism which brought him a sensational lawsuit. I was present at the sitting of the Mülhausen Tribunal before which he was condemned. The Imperial Procurator made merely a passing mention of the three incriminating words. On the other hand, he laid himself out to deliver an interminable speech on the general political attitude of the accused, whom he depicted as the most dangerous adversary of Germanism. The case ended in a sentence of three months' imprisonment. Whilst Delsor was in prison I was entrusted with the task of replacing him on the *Review*. This was my *début* as a journalist.

Under the Combes Ministry, the Abbé Delsor, who had been invited by a French Deputy of the Vosges to preside over a Christmas-tree fête given by the Alsace-Lorrainers of Luneville, was expelled as a "German" subject from French territory before he had even been able to speak there. Some of my readers will recollect the stormy discussion that resulted in the French Parliament. The Ministry narrowly escaped defeat. Notwithstanding the numerous expressions of sympathy which the severe and unjustifiable measure of which he had been the object brought him, the Abbé Delsor, without confessing it to himself, felt his faith in France as a liberator decline. He visibly struggled against the prejudices which invaded him. Embittered and exasperated, he no longer succeeded, however, in fighting the good fight with the same ardour as before. His discontentment was to increase still further when, notwithstanding the applications of his friends, he was several times refused the simple safe-

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conduct he had applied for in order to visit friends in Normandy. When, later, thanks to the intervention of M. Paul Deschanel, I obtained the necessary document for him, he refused to make use of it.

After this, is it surprising that, at the opening of the war, the Abbé Delsor did not take up the heroic attitude we hoped he would assume? I am aware that, later, he atoned for his weaknesses—of which I was the first victim—by particularly meritorious acts of courage. It will be to him especially that, to-morrow, we must apply the adage, “To comprehend everything is to pardon everything.”

Charles Hauss is an entirely different type of man. Coming of a very poor family, he was educated at an elementary school, after which, during two years, he attended the classes of a school kept by French missionaries. He started work with the management of the Alsace-Lorraine Railway Company, and whilst an employee was a member of the delegation which, at the time of the suppression of the Fedelta, a Catholic society of Strassburg, called on Fichter, the Prefect of Police, to protest against that measure. The next day he was dismissed. He next became a player at the Cathedral on that now little used wind instrument called a serpent; then a reporter on the staff of *Elsaesser*. At the time of the election of M. Spiess, at Schlestadt, in 1896, Hauss suddenly revealed himself to be a first-class popular speaker. Tall and of fine bearing, possessing sympathetic features and a powerful voice, quick in his replies, endowed with a wonderful memory, and, moreover, an indefatigable worker, he produced so deep an impression on his crowded audiences that, in 1898, despite the sly opposition of a few noteworthy Catholics, he was elected a member of the Reichstag.

Hauss, displeased with the attitude of *Elsaesser*, the

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journal of Mgr. Muller-Simonis, a semi-*Rallié*, founded, with Delsor, the *Volksblatt*, in which he defended a more clearly defined Alsatian policy. At first the paper met with considerable success, but later its action was paralysed through financial difficulties.

Both in the Reichstag and in the Strassburg Parliament, which he entered later, Hauss was able to bring himself to the fore by his great ability as a speaker. This self-taught man was also a remarkable political tactician. On many occasions he was even a little bit too much so. But it is only right to recognise that, whilst sometimes giving pledges to a Government which knew how to exploit financial difficulties, in the midst of which, owing to his excessive prodigality, he was constantly struggling, he never completely abdicated his independence, and remained, even during most difficult times, a good Alsatian.

I shall not say as much of Dr. Ricklin, who succeeded M. Winterer in the Reichstag when this veteran champion, tired out, felt that he could no longer ask his faithful electors of Altkirch-Thann to re-elect him. The Danne-marie doctor had already at that time a rather dark past. His mother having married a second time, when he was ten years old, little Eugen was taken by his stepfather, a Bavarian railway official, to the latter's native place, where the boy received a thorough German education. The numerous deep cuts that Ricklin bore on his face proved that he had been a very quarrelsome student at his Munich school.

Returning to Alsace, he became a country doctor. In those days he made a display of his Germanophile sentiments, never missed an opportunity on the occasion of the Emperor's birthday of putting on his uniform of an assistant doctor in the German Army, and lived in a state



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of continual discord with his *curé*. His marriage to one of his cousins, a very wealthy girl whose education had been wholly French, seemed to have a good influence over him. The necessity of adapting his opinions to those of his electors completed his conversion—at any rate in appearance. Ricklin became anti-governmental and a frequent attendant of the religious services in his parish. A short time after his election the Government brutally deprived him of the mayoralty of Dannemarie. Very selfish, the member for Altkirch-Thann then threw himself into the most violent opposition.

Preiss always distrusted this tardy recruit. A long time before Ricklin betrayed the Alsatian cause, he foresaw that defection, which was precipitated by his caustic criticisms. In 1911, at the time of the discussion of the constitutional reform of Alsace-Lorraine, Ricklin, more prudent and more diplomatic, however, than Vonderscheer, engaged in the most suspicious manoeuvres and thus gained the friendship of Secretary of State Zorn von Bulach. The year following he became, thanks to Government support, President of the Second Chamber of Strassburg, and after that he impudently paraded his Germanism. At the beginning of the war, Ricklin delivered wildly patriotic speeches; he even went as far as denouncing and threatening the Francophile populations of the annexed provinces. He has again put on his uniform of an officer of the reserve, after having, a few years before, noisily resigned his post as assistant army doctor. Whereas his colleagues, formerly the most compromised, observe an attitude of reserve, he seeks for every opportunity of giving pledges to the military government.

Ricklin is cunning and shrewd, but likewise brutal. Inordinately ambitious and sordidly avaricious, his sole

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desire is for honours and money. In order to obtain them he is ready to pass over the bodies of his closest friends. He is certainly the most detestable of all the *Ralliés*.

Poor Vonderscheer, who got M. Spiess's seat at Schlestadt, exhibited the same failings, but his evolution was less brilliant, because the man was more in the shade. A lawyer with no ability, his great ambition was to obtain an important notary's office from the Ministry. He was tenacious in his ambitions, but very timid by temperament. Over the steps he took to attain his end he was very long, and he moved in the midst of the greatest mystery. In the presence of his colleagues, he derived a certain amount of glory from his relationship with a French general. We were ignorant of the fact that, whilst he was multiplying his protests of friendship towards France, he was maintaining the most cordial relations with the members of the Strassburg Government. By means of intrigues, he succeeded in getting himself elected President of the Alsace-Lorraine Centre, and such was his duplicity that we regarded this election as a brilliant success for our national cause. But the very next day he sold us to Baron von Bulach. His treason became patent in 1911. He it was who, behind our backs, negotiated, on the one hand with the Chancellor, on the other with the German Centre, the constitutional compromise which was to hand Alsace-Lorraine over to Prussia. There were stormy scenes at that time between Vonderscheer and the other members of our group. The petty Strassburg lawyer, who thought that he had at last got his notary's office, nevertheless threw down his mask and shamefully betrayed us. Expelled from the party, he no longer had the courage to ask his electors to re-elect him. Baron von Bulach paid for the services that Vonderscheer had

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rendered by giving him a small post in the magistracy. Since then, the ex-Deputy, returning to the obscurity from which he ought never to have come, has seen all the people of Alsace-Lorraine turn from him in disgust.

I have yet to mention another renegade—the lawyer Grégoire, of Metz. He, at any rate, had the frankness from the very first to display his Germanophile sentiments openly. His mother and wife, moreover, were German.

Grégoire had tried to place his hand on his colleague of Lorraine, M. Charles de Wendel. A short time before his election, this great manufacturer of Lorraine had had to resume his Alsace-Lorraine nationality in order to prevent the management of the important works of Hayange passing into the hands of a German. Of entirely French education, he had an inborn repugnance to manifestations of Germanism. He was seen but little in Berlin; but, on his rare appearances, he always joined forces with the Alsace-Lorraine group, whereas Grégoire, who had had himself inscribed as a “guest” in the National-Liberal fraction, regularly gave his votes to Bassermann and his friends.

When the question of the renewal of the military septennate came before the Imperial Parliament, Charles de Wendel was the object of the most pressing solicitations. The majority was doubtful. A single vote might decide the fate of the Bill. Grégoire would not let go of his colleague, who was also constantly summoned to the Councillors of the Chancellery, who, in order to make him give way, employed the vilest means of blackmailing him. Persecution assumed such proportions that the wretched Charles de Wendel, tossed about between his political convictions and his business interests, came to the point of no longer knowing where his duty lay.



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Half an hour before the vote took place I was conversing with him in the lobbies. When the division bell rang and announced that the fatal hour had come, the Lorraine Deputy made an energetic gesture, uttered in an angry voice (God pardon him !) the word that made Cambronne famous, and rushed out of the Reichstag, never to appear there again. The Government was enraged at his abstention. Charles de Wendel, disgusted with the persecutions of which he was the object since then, soon returned to Paris, where he hastened to resume his French nationality.

I shall not speak of other colleagues who always did their duty courageously, because the good I should say of them might expose them to reprisals. I feel that my pen, in the course of this narrative, is often arrested by that scruple. It is obviously impossible to relate the history of Alsace-Lorraine during the last forty-seven years until the day on which the basely vindictive Germans have evacuated the country. At present, they still hold too many hostages to make it possible to tell the whole comforting truth.

## CHAPTER X

### MY DEFENCE OF ALSACE-LORRAINE

#### A Speech—Receptions—Our Guests.

As information, I think it will be well if I reproduce here the principal passages of a speech which I delivered from the tribune of the Reichstag on January 28th, 1911, on the occasion of the debate on the constitutional reform of Alsace-Lorraine. Readers will note in it certain artifices of language to which we were obliged to have recourse to express our secret thoughts, but for which we should have incurred the severities of the law. I translate from the official stenographic report of the sitting.

*Gentlemen,—For the past two days the representatives of the Government and the Liberal and Conservative speakers have placed our population upon its trial. To be just, however, one must distribute responsibilities better. The great obstacle to the normal development of the country is to be found in the fact that there has been with us, during the past forty years, two populations, living side by side, without understanding each other, each of whom retain their customs and traditions, and who often end in fighting. We have not the slightest intention of generalising. A large number of our compatriots, old Germans, have allowed themselves to be*

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*assimilated ; but there are others who still behave as conquerors, and thence arise the greatest difficulties.*

*We are constantly asked for guarantees. What guarantees must we give you ? We pay our taxes, we respect authority—as far as it merits it—(loud laughter), and the children of the country frequent the schools and the German barracks. (Interruptions on the benches of the Federal Council.) Moreover, all the men who have occupied themselves with politics during the past twenty years have declared a hundred times that they accept the present situation. What more do you require ? With what thermometer do you propose to measure the heat of our patriotism ? When shall we come of age ? When shall we be considered worthy of sitting at the table of the Empire on an equality with the members of the German nation ? We are given only evasive replies ; you refuse to recognise our rights. And if the incident of which so much has been said had not occurred, others would have been found—(cries of “ Very good ! ” from the Socialist benches)—to deprive us of our liberties. (Continued cries from the Socialists.)*

*Gentlemen, even a marriage of convenience may be successful, but on condition that one of the partners does not constantly ill-treat the other. It is said that there are women who like to be beaten. I have never heard the same thing said about a nation. As M. Preiss has already said, you have annexed, not a tribe of negroes, but a highly civilised people—even much more civilised, in those days at least, than the Junkers of the East, allow me to point out to those gentlemen on the Right. (Cries of dissent.)*

*Our only crime, Gentlemen, is that we have been French. We are punished because we have lived for two hundred years under French domination.*

*There is evidently a profound abyss between the two*



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groups of our population. Especially do we realise this when we read the malignant articles in which a number of men in the pay of the country calumniate our population and misconstrue the smallest incident—(cries of dissent)—in such a way that the situation can no longer be sanely judged.

Gentlemen, I have been a journalist for seventeen years. I have often been reproached for being violent and sarcastic in my writings. Well, I can certify that all my articles were merely replies to attacks. (Herr Mandel, "Even your articles against me?") Yes, Mr. Secretary of State, even those; for at the *Landesausschuss*, as elsewhere, it was you who opened fire. There also I only replied.

Every piece of child's play is transformed into an affair of State. Look at the Wegelin case at Mülhausen. A Swiss, having drunk a little more than was good for him, has the 'Marseillaise' played and engages in a little ill-timed demonstration which his nearest neighbours hardly noticed. In consequence of this incident, the whole heavy machinery of the law is set in movement and the entire population of Alsace-Lorraine is punished. The affair of the flag of the Colmar theatre, of which Herr Dirksen has spoken, will shortly result in a trial, and once more we shall find that it is a mere trifle.

Our Secretary of State has also been a victim of the correspondents of the Pan-German newspapers. You know the story of Valentin's dog, and how on that occasion we all had to defend Herr von Bulach. The *Statthalter* himself has been the object of attacks on the part of those individuals; for every statesman who shows us the least kindness is immediately denounced in Berlin and nailed to the pillory in the Pan-German organs.

There you have the principal motive for our earnest desire to be at last masters in our own house. We wish to

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*put an end to these denunciations made in Berlin, we no longer wish to be directed by Berlin, and we know very well that on the day our officials have nothing more to expect from elsewhere, they will end by uniting in fellowship with us. In the meanwhile, they form an exclusive caste, intent above all in safeguarding its privileges.*

*Twenty-four years ago, Herr Petri, Under-Secretary of State, already protested with the greatest energy against the calumnious articles of the Pan-German Press, and pointed out that the intention of their authors was to prevent us attaining our autonomy. Therefore, there is nothing new in the phenomenon.*

*The saddest part about this affair, Gentlemen, is that all of you who listen to me, or almost all, take your knowledge of the affairs of Alsace-Lorraine from that newspaper correspondence. ("Hear, hear!") The majority of you have not the slightest idea of what is happening with us and have never taken the trouble to go and make inquiries on the spot. The Pan-German sheets are your daily bread and from them you form your opinion regarding Alsace-Lorraine. ("Hear, hear!")*

*The system employed up to now has failed. You have now an opportunity of doing good work and giving satisfaction to Alsace-Lorraine. When you have granted complete autonomy to our provinces, all the painful incidents of recent times will disappear. We ask merely to be treated as equals in the national family into which we were forced and no longer to be the collective property of the States but co-proprietors of the Empire. That is our right. And if it sometimes happens that we give way to our somewhat fiery temperament, if events which displease you still sometimes occur in Alsace-Lorraine, recollect that the French have already said of us—"A headstrong people, but sound of heart."*

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*And now I will ask you the following question, "What has been done to merit our affection?"*

*Immediately after the annexation, all the young men of Alsace-Lorraine were subjected to military service, which resulted—and rightly so—in an emigration en masse. It was possible to act otherwise, as was done in the case of Heligoland.*

*After that came the incident of those who were called upon to choose their nationality. The Under-Secretary of State himself will confirm the enormous difficulties arising through the law; for even now cases crop up in which, despite all his knowledge, it is difficult for him to decide the question of nationality.*

*Thirty-one years of dictatorship! Gentlemen, it is absolutely impossible for you to form an idea of that dictatorship. One must have felt its weight in order to be able to realise it. I myself have seen the suppression of two prosperous journals, in the establishment of which I assisted, and which the Statthalter swept out of existence by a stroke of his pen. A capital of 70,000 francs (£2,800) was thereby destroyed.*

*And the expulsions! They were not, perhaps, numerous; nevertheless, those who were driven out of the country were German citizens to whom the general laws of the country ought to have been applied.*

*Then there was the question of passports. Only those people through whose instrumentality sons, who had been summoned to their parents' death-bed, were arrested at the frontier know how hard that exceptional measure was. Passports were no longer necessary in Turkey, and I believe that even the Young Turks have abolished them.*

*Gentlemen, to prove to you with what little regard we are treated, I will call your attention to one more fact. For*



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*the past four years the Landesausschuss has asked every session that refractory conscripts and deserters of the early years following the annexation—that is to say, the period during which it was excusable to leave the country in order to avoid service in the German Army—should be amnestied. On several occasions, our Government has given us the assurance that it would intervene energetically in Berlin, in order to give us satisfaction. Up to this very day nothing has come. Even this little concession is not made to us. It is true that the military authorities are opposed to it.*

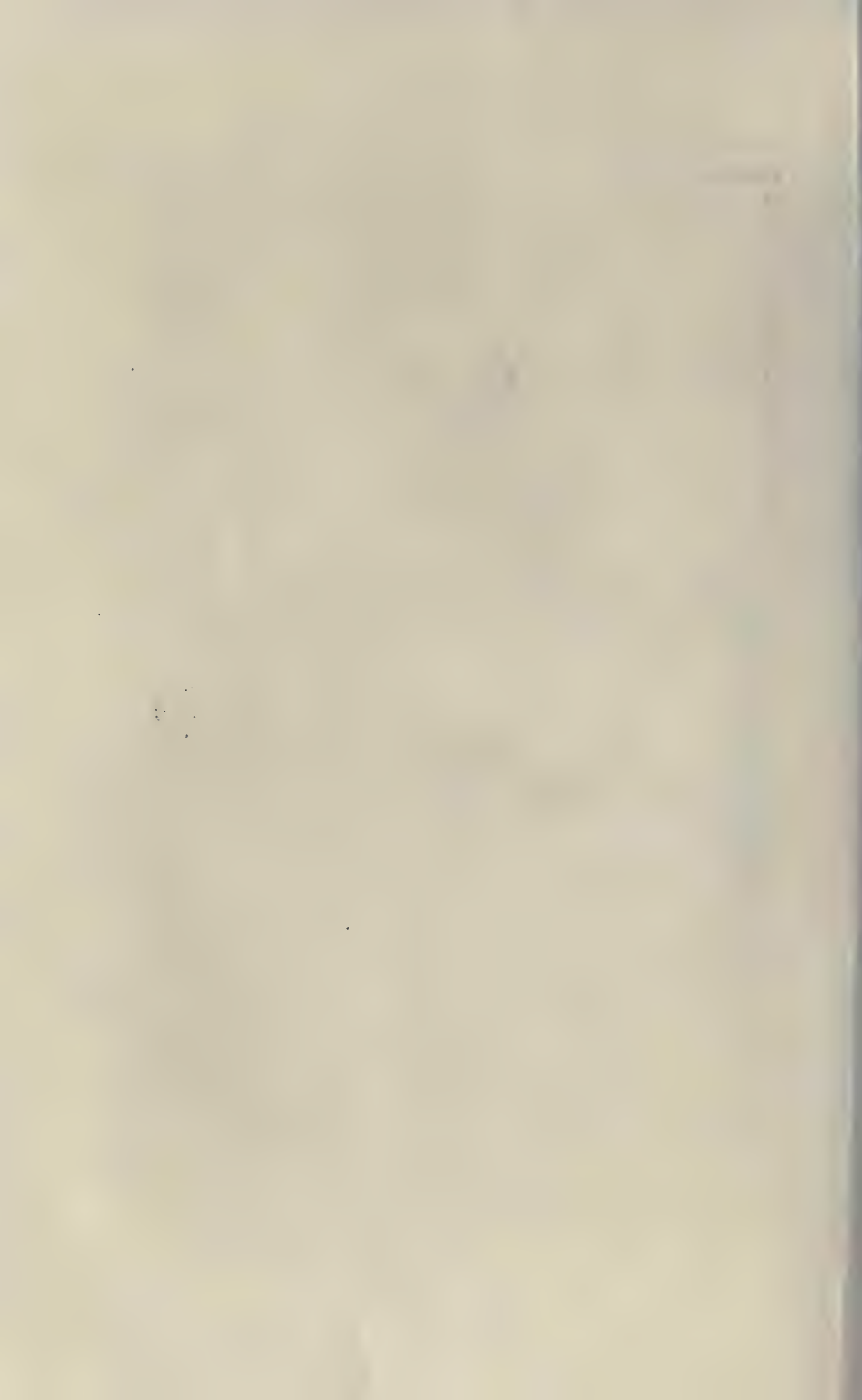
*And now let us speak of the regulations regarding shop-signs and advertisements. Every time I walk under the Lindens, I am amused by the fact that fifty per cent. of the sign-boards to be seen there would be forbidden by the police with us. ("Hear, hear!")*

*Moreover, Gentlemen, I am going to prove to you that our Government is the first to break the law. (Here the speaker drew a packet of cigarettes from his pocket.) Our tradesmen are forbidden to sell their goods with French labels. Now, on this packet of cigarettes I read these words in German: "Kaiserliche Tabakmanufaktur Strassburg." But I also find in French, "Exportation.—Importation, 20 cigarettes élégantes. Maryland. Le Paquet, 50 pfennig." (Prolonged laughter.) Those gentlemen of the Government are well aware, therefore, of the advantages to be derived from French labels, but they forbid our poor tradesmen to follow their example, even though by so doing they ruin them.*

*What is to be said, too, regarding the struggle against the teaching of French? Secretary of State Delbrück told you the day before yesterday that in 1870 an overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of Alsace-Lorraine spoke German. Under those conditions the prohibition of French in our frontier country was at least useless. Only those among us who feel*



THE STRASSBURG MEMORIAL.  
On the Place de la Concorde, Paris.





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*a real need of this language take the trouble to learn it. Now, the following phenomenon has arisen. Our country is inundated with bilingual Swiss and Luxemburgers, who come and take away from our young men the best positions in private industry.*

*I shall not insist on the subject of secret police reports and black lists. These latter, Mr. Secretary of State, still exist, notwithstanding all denials. (Cries of "Very good!" from the Socialists.)*

*Nor shall I speak of the constant supervision to which our leading men are subjected. If I have taken all these measures into account, it is solely for the purpose of establishing the fact that our conquerors—for it is always necessary to use that word—have done everything in their power to molest us in our habits and customs. And yet the measures of a general nature are even less irritating than the pettifogging litigation to which our people are subjected by small and middle-class officials. The Government has often committed blunders, but these become insupportable when subordinates make them theirs—those subordinates who operate in the Pan-German way.*

*And now, Gentlemen, a final question. What are the accusations brought against us? Nothing must be hidden! We are reproached with our hostility towards Germany and our sympathy for France.*

*We do not oppose Germanism in itself, but Germanism as it is manifested with us—that meddlesome, pettifogging Germanism which is constantly fighting against our customs and traditions and which would deprive us of all our liberties.*

*Gentlemen, it is said that confidence inspires confidence. It is equally true that distrust engenders distrust. (Laughter.) It is indisputable that for the past forty years we have incessantly been treated with distrust. And yet you would have*

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*us fall into your arms and overwhelm you with declarations of love? Certainly not! (Laughter.)*

*Proof of the maladroitness of the methods employed in our case is to be found in the fact that Herr Preiss has already pointed out and that each of my colleagues can confirm. The young generation is further away than ours from that petty, mean and tormenting Germanism. Soon we shall be Moderates, and pointed out as models for the newcomers. (Prolonged laughter.)*

*Now, as regards our sympathy for France. Gentlemen, first of all allow me to tell you that we have no reason for detesting our former Fatherland. Under French domination we were very well treated. We enjoyed all the advantages of common law. The people of Alsace-Lorraine attained the highest positions. Even since the war, those of our compatriots who have emigrated have in many cases had a brilliant career beyond the Vosges. Take, for instance, the higher officers of the Army. I believe that in the French Army there are no fewer than 150 Generals in active service or unattached who are natives of the annexed provinces. Now, Gentlemen, count those of Alsace-Lorraine who have obtained official positions in their own country. I can tell you beforehand that you will arrive at a very poor percentage.*

*Our young people affirm—whether rightly or wrongly is a question which would take us too long to examine—that even when at school they are systematically placed in the background. It is certain that in none of the Confederate States could one find, at least formerly, so many pupils who failed to rise in their forms. It is evident, therefore, that there is a system in force to prevent young Alsace-Lorrainers from continuing their studies and attaining official positions. (Interruptions and cries of “Give your proofs.”)*

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*I am going to give you a proof which nobody can confute. We have done everything in our power, recently, to reserve at least the small official posts for our compatriots. The people of Alsace-Lorraine have always been considered excellent soldiers. It has been easy to induce them to re-enlist when lower official posts were reserved for those soldiers who had served twelve years. Now, what happened on the day we were able to supply almost the whole of our staff? In 1904 the Minister of War issued a decree in accordance with which fifty per cent. of small official posts in Alsace-Lorraine were henceforth to be reserved for re-enlisted non-commissioned officers of the other Confederate States, on the only condition that they had done their service in the country of the Empire. Let those non-commissioned officers ask for posts in their own country! (Cries of "Quite right" from the Centre.) But in that way they attained their aim: Alsace-Lorraine was colonised by old Germans—a veritable Polish colonisation, although by roundabout means.*

*When people speak of French tendencies, they have again another object in view. Your present and ours are parallel. For the past forty years we have belonged to the same country and our destinies are the same. But, Gentlemen, our paths fork in different directions. Nobody can prevent our recollections going back to the French period, and it is quite natural that these recollections, which were often glorious, do not conform to yours. How can you ask us, for instance, to celebrate the anniversary of Sedan? I can very well understand that you are proud of the recollection of that day. But you cannot ask the inhabitants of Alsace-Lorraine to rejoice on the anniversary of the day on which their fathers and brothers were beaten—no, Gentlemen, you cannot ask that of men who are conscious of their dignity. You must make your mind clear about this—our*



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*history is not your history. Let it suffice that you hear us say that, at the present time, our economic interests conform to yours.*

*Finally, Gentlemen, our sympathy towards France also includes our double culture. We cling to that culture, and whatever may be done we will not allow it to be taken away from us. ("Hear, hear!") It is advantageous and we should be the poorer if we renounced it. The majority among you, Gentlemen, have taken a good deal of trouble to learn a foreign language, in order to be able to draw upon the literary treasures of that language. Must we, who, in the course of two centuries, have painfully learnt a little French, give it up? No! Gentlemen, we shall retain what we have acquired. There is nothing subversive in that. We are merely appealing to the right of a nation which respects itself and would safeguard its intellectual patrimony.*

*I was very amused to hear, in the course of the preceding speeches, that the Alsace-Lorraine nation preserved, on the whole, a calm and loyal attitude. It appears that there are only a few abettors of disorder—(laughter)—and it is because of these that the whole legislative machinery must be set in motion. Gentlemen, you yourselves do not believe it. An Empire of 66 million inhabitants is frightened of a handful of agitators in a province where 80,000 bayonets are planted? If what was said in those speeches partly applies to myself—I hope I shall not be counted among the abettors of disorder—I shall be more than proud of having thus thrown the whole Empire into a flurry. (Laughter.)*

*Gentlemen, we find ourselves enclosed within a vicious circle. We are ill-treated because we are not satisfied, and discontent increases among us because our ill-treatment is continued. ("Hear, hear," and laughter.)*

*The system employed up to now has failed. You have*

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*now an opportunity of doing good work, of giving us an Alsace-Lorraine satisfied with its lot.*

Readers will have noticed in the preceding speech the stress I employed when speaking of the two populations which live side by side in Alsace-Lorraine without understanding each other and without interpenetration. Nothing exasperated the immigrants more than that statement, to which we returned incessantly. Thus it was that, in my newspaper, I had a special rubric entitled "Their Culture," in which, from day to day, I pointed out the differences between the customs, habits and traditions of the Alsace-Lorraine population and those of the Germans established in our country. The immigrants would very much have preferred sledge-hammer protests to these perpetual pin-pricks, against which they could not defend themselves, and in the giving of which two or three of my collaborators, especially Hansi, excelled.

For want of being able to shout "Long live France!" we had thus come to repeat incessantly "Down with German culture!" We were not in want of pretexts. If need be, we brought them forth.

Above, I spoke of a reception at the Chancellor's Palace. Every year the Secretaries of State also gave a *Bierabend*—a Beer Evening. When I went to the Reichstag for the first time, an usher begged me to give him thirty of my visiting cards.

"Why, in the name of all that's wonderful?" I asked.

"It's the custom. Your cards will be sent to the President, Vice-President and Secretaries, to the Chancellor and his principal collaborators."

I made inquiries, and found indeed that it was usual, at the beginning of each session, for the members to leave

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their visiting-cards at the residences of the chief officials of the Empire, through the intermediary of the executive of the Reichstag. So I observed the formality, and a few days later received, also from the usher's hand, a number of paste-boards of all sizes, by means of which the owners responded to my politeness.

Later, I learnt what this exchange of official amiability signified. A few Socialist Deputies had given an insolent reply to the invitations sent them to attend official receptions. Some one had therefore imagined the plan of leaving visiting-cards, which meant, "If you invite me, I am quite disposed to attend your evening receptions." The Socialists, at least those of former days, did not leave their cards on the high officials of the State, who could henceforth abstain from sending them invitations without breaking the rules of politeness.

Like my colleagues, I therefore regularly received the little printed invitations begging me to come and take, on such-and-such a day, a glass of beer at his Excellency's.

"A glass of beer" may appear to be a somewhat Spartan repast. As a matter of fact, we found the refreshment rooms in the official *salons* well provided with food and drink, which the guests pillaged impudently. During these receptions I have witnessed amazingly comical scenes. The tables on which the eatables were piled were literally besieged. German voracity is beyond all moderation and deficient in all sense of shame. Certain members of the Reichstag—and not the least important of them—heaped ham, pies, Russian salad, cream tarts and other "delicacies" on their plates to the point of bringing the cunning construction of all these dainties to a state of smash. Then, duly loaded, they installed themselves at little tables and devoured all these dissimilar



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cates pell-mell. But it was chiefly the refreshment counter where alcoholic drinks were dispensed that sustained a regular siege. One evening, I got immense amusement by observing the "operations" of a Bavarian colleague who, having succeeded in getting in the front row of those crowding to the table, gulped down, one after the other, no fewer than ten glasses of champagne and still continued to hold out his empty glass to the astonished waiter. These scenes of gluttony and drunkenness delighted us. You might have imagined that these men, who, however, belonged to the best German families, had had nothing either to drink or eat for a week.

My colleagues and I long hesitated over the question as to whether or not we ought to attend these official receptions. After due reflection, we came to the common agreement that it would be well for us to attend them assiduously, because there, more than anywhere else, was it possible for us to obtain useful information. A half-drunk German is very communicative.

A strange adventure happened to me the first time I went to the Chancellery. The reception—a strictly Parliamentary one—began at 9 p.m. Thinking that politeness demanded punctuality, I entered the Wilhelmstrasse Palace exactly at the hour. In the cloak-room, not a hat was to be seen! At the top of the staircase was a succession of brilliantly illuminated *salons*, in which I could see rows of gold-laced lackeys, who, as I passed, bowed low. Very much put out, I advanced haphazard, whereupon an orderly officer rushed forward, asked for my name, and introduced me into the last drawing-room, where Princess von Bülow was sitting by the side of a lady companion. The introduction took place and a conversation was started—in French. Thus I remained

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for ten minutes face to face with the Chancellor's wife. I swore, that evening, that never again would I be there to time.

Receptions were almost always held on the eve of an important vote. It was before a well-loaded table and with glass in hand that the Chancellor and his collaborators tried to break down the final resistance of the Opposition and to facilitate profitable compromises. Recalcitrant Deputies were the object of the most engaging attentions. To a disinterested guest, the scene presented the greatest interest. Most flattered by the amiable open-heartedness and smiling familiarity of the official personages, the Gerstenbergers and Erzbergers visibly blew themselves out like the frog in the fable. The party leaders, already won over to the policy of the Government, looked with complacent eyes on the groups in which their work was being completed. On all sides the Opposition showed a spirit of "comradeship," in answer to the Chancellor's smile.

For a long time they deigned "to honour" us with the same solicitations. Later, when it became quite clear that our national opposition was irreducible, they showed us less assiduous attention.

It was during a garden-party at the Chancellery that I found myself alone with Admiral von Tirpitz. It was at the time when the French Navy, under the Pelletan Ministry, was passing through a dangerous crisis.

The great head of the German Navy is a broad-shouldered giant with a small head enframed by huge whiskers. One is quite surprised to hear a thin little voice—that of a child or a eunuch—issue from his powerful frame. The Admiral spoke to me about the French Navy. Now it is a curious phenomenon that, far from rejoicing over

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its decadence, he seemed to regret it sincerely. It was a case of the artist who is pained to see a fine picture go to wrack and ruin, although it may be the work of a competitor. I have never better understood the method and obstinacy which the creator of the German Navy brought to his audacious enterprise. Tirpitz is a born sailor. His ships are everything to him. With so keen an enthusiast as this at the head of the German Admiralty, the Imperial Navy would soon, if England had allowed him the time, have conquered the first place on the seas.

It was Tirpitz, indeed, who conceived the dream of endowing Germany with a powerful colonial empire and assuring its maritime hegemony. We are all acquainted with William II's celebrated phrase, "Our future is on the water." The Admiral-in-Chief was certainly its inspirer. At the time when I conversed for nearly half an hour with Tirpitz, he, who detested England above all nations, naïvely hoped that a reconciliation between Germany and France might be effected. Perhaps it was also for this reason that he deplored the lamentable state of the instrument which he thought he might find useful in conquering "the hereditary enemy."

In 1906 it happened to be our turn to invite the members of the Federal Council and the Reichstag to a *soirée*, and under the following circumstances. Our Alsace-Lorraine wine-growers complained bitterly of the fact that their remarkable vintages were systematically ignored in Germany, where, however, the wines of the Rhine and the Moselle were sold in all the restaurants at very remunerative prices. It looked as though the big wine merchants of Treves, Cologne, and Mayence had formed a conspiracy of silence on the subject of our most celebrated vintages. It was necessary to defeat it.



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So the idea occurred to Preiss to organise a tasting of wines in the Reichstag. Our German colleagues welcomed the proposal enthusiastically. The principal growers of Alsace-Lorraine placed at our disposal 1,500 bottles of their best brands. Moreover, we obtained from the Strassburg Parliament a subvention which enabled us to organise a brilliant evening reception.

The day was fixed with the President. The 96-yard long gallery was transformed into a restaurant. A luxurious refreshment-room was installed under the big dome, and there, side by side with mountains of Münster cheeses and succulent Strassburg *charcuterie*, the 1,500 bottles, with their gold and silver helmets, were drawn up in thirty-two companies ready to file off (for there were thirty-two different vintages to be tasted). An orchestra was to facilitate the digestion of our guests by enveloping them in floods of harmony.

At eight o'clock, drawn up on both sides of the entrance, the members for Alsace-Lorraine were busy shaking the hands of their guests: the Chancellor, the Secretaries of State, the members of the Federal Council, and the Deputies of all the groups, for on that day the Socialists had given up the idea of boycotting Parliamentary evenings.

Our good wines performed miracles. At eleven o'clock Bebel was sitting between Prince von Bülow and Count von Posadowsky, whilst Scheidemann and another revolutionary Deputy were delivering wildly ridiculous speeches.

Good old Groeber ate a whole Münster, repeating as he did so, "It's the king of cheeses." Moreover, he washed it down with two bottles of red Kitterlé, which he pronounced to be "the king of wines."

There were rather more than three hundred persons in

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the great hall. At four o'clock in the morning 1,400 bottles were empty. Don't forget that our wines contain between ten and eleven degrees of alcohol. At midnight I left the Reichstag, accompanied by Secretary of State von Posadowsky. In the Thiergarten we encountered a Deputy tenderly embracing a tree and making vain efforts to preserve his equilibrium.

Never before had the Reichstag echoed with such noisy but also with such cordial effusions.

I must add, to the honour of our wines, that the next day several of my colleagues, including the Socialist Hue, said to me :

"It's a curious thing. Yesterday evening I was as round as a ball, yet to-day I've not got the slightest trace of seediness (*Katzenjammer*)."

Our wines, therefore, scored the greatest success at the Reichstag. Result of our tasting : not a single order was given to our wine-growers, neither by the members of the Government, nor by the Deputies, nor by the restaurant and hotel keepers of Berlin ! They continued to boycott our natural products in favour of the adulterated wines of the Moselle and the Rhine.

## CHAPTER XI

### WAR AIMS FORESHADOWED

The German Artillery—General von Einem's curious Declaration—  
A visit to Count Zeppelin—The Vulnerability of his Dirigibles  
—A Warlike Banquet.

IN 1903 we were invited to go on an excursion to the Jutterbock manœuvring ground. A hundred Deputies, accompanied by the Minister of War and a few general officers, took a special train that had been reserved for them. The military authorities wished to prove to them the power of the new ammunition for field artillery. When we arrived, we were shown six guns, the wheels of which had been buried up to the axles. After indirect firing at moving targets, which we could easily observe with our glasses, the guns were carried by soldiers to the summit of a hillock, where the artillerymen, after getting their spades to work and throwing a few spadefuls of sand around the wheels, proceeded to give us an exhibition of direct rapid firing. Now, I noticed that the pieces recoiled a good deal at each shot—executed, indeed, a veritable St. Vitus's Dance—and that it was constantly necessary to rectify the aim.

At the luncheon which was afterwards served at the officers' quarters, it chanced that General von Einem, the Minister of War, arriving late, sat down next to me.



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Von Einem, who has been a good deal talked about since the opening of the present war (he commands a group of armies before Soissons), is tall, thin, fair, and graceful. He possesses nothing of the stiffness of the Prussian officer. He is easy of approach and his politeness is unconstrained. He had formerly been in garrison at Colmar as a major in the artillery, so we immediately found a subject of conversation. Then, quite naturally, we came to speak of war. I did not hide from the Minister the surprise I had experienced on noting the lack of stability of the German guns.

"I know that," replied the General; "but our pieces of artillery are very much lighter and especially much less complicated than our neighbours' 75 gun. The mechanism of the French gun is so delicate that a workman-specialist has to be attached to each piece (*sic*)."

The Minister afterwards made the following curious declaration to me :

"When armies reach the figure of four million combatants on one side and three million and a half on the other, numbers no longer play the same rôle. The armament is equal in the two countries. The whole question is whether the French will find a second Napoleon and whether we shall have a second Moltke. Now, we know nothing about that, for neither on the one side nor on the other is there a general who has commanded on a sixty kilometre front."

Four million German combatants ! A sixty kilometre front ! Was the General sincere when mentioning these figures to me, or was his intention to lead me into error ? I cannot say. I am rather disposed to believe, however, that at that time the German Staff did not yet foresee either the mobilisation of ten million men or, especially,

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the formidable extension the battles of the present war were to assume.

A few years later, I joined in another collective excursion. The first German dirigible had just accomplished a voyage from Friedrichshaven to Berlin, and the performance, besides provoking the wildest enthusiasm, had raised the most extraordinary hopes throughout the whole of Germany. People abroad will never know how greatly the invention of the Zeppelin, or, to be more accurate, the ingenious adjustment by Count Zeppelin of a French invention, contributed to favour the Pan-Germanist movement in the Empire.

The first "cruisers of the air" had, however, been destroyed or damaged by sudden gusts of wind. Zeppelin, who had sacrificed the whole of his fortune in constructing them, found himself penniless. Therefore the authorities, in order to awaken the interest of Parliament in dirigibles, hit on the idea of organising the journey in which I took part, accompanied by all my colleagues of Alsace-Lorraine.

The large hotels of Constance were reserved for members of Parliament. It was in July. Favoured with splendid weather, a special steamer took us to the Württemberg side of the lake. Never have I seen a larger assembly of people. The lake was covered with steamers and boats adorned with flags, and so loaded with spectators that they were in danger of sinking. The façades of the houses of Friedrichshaven were hidden under garlands and flags. Every moment bursts of cheering came from the huge crowd. When Count Zeppelin's white peaked cap appeared on the landing stage, it seemed to me as though the heavens were going to fall under the formidable and continued shouting of "Hoch ! Hoch ! Hoch !"

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The inventor, a small-statured, corpulent, bustling man, very supple in spite of his advanced age, replied to these ovations with a nervous gesture. He was visibly satisfied to have his revenge ; for Parseval, an advocate of balloons with a supple envelope, had caused him much anxiety. He received us with the greatest cordiality. Under the direction of himself and his engineers, we immediately set off for the airship building yard.

An enormous carcass constructed of aluminium rods was shown us. I must confess that, on examining this light structure, I had the impression of being face to face with a giant's plaything. Everything seemed fragile in that ingenious but unstable assemblage of thin plates barely two to three millimetres thick. Even the few main girders looked thin and slender. How well I could then understand that a shock against a mere apple-tree had, a few weeks before, shattered one of the monsters they were going to show us !

A few hundred yards from the hangars, a completed dirigible was held fast to the ground. This was the Zeppelin in which a few privileged guests were to take their seats and make an hour's excursion above the lake. Arrangements had been made for six voyages. As not more than a dozen passengers, in addition to the crew, could be taken up each time, lots were drawn in order not to arouse feelings of jealousy. Preiss's name was drawn. I was less lucky. Just as I was resigning myself to the idea of not getting a ride in the Zeppelin, an engineer, who had explained all the details of the mechanism of the airship to me, said, smiling :

"Keep close to me. Perhaps I shall manage all the same to get you on board."

Indeed, at the fifth voyage, Count Zeppelin, who each



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time verified the weight of his passengers, leaned over the edge of the car and exclaimed with a vexed air :

“ There is a deficiency of fifty kilos. ! ”

“ Exactly my weight,” I cried.

“ Ascend and quick’s the word,” replied the Count.

I told an outrageous lie, for I weighed twenty kilos. more.

Once installed in the middle car, I understood why they had accepted me as ballast. The inventor, holding in his hand the list of passengers with their respective weights opposite their names, assigned us our places in such a way as to distribute the load equally, and urged us not to change our seats under any pretext whatsoever, as well as not to make any unnecessary movements. This terrible war machine was decidedly still more unstable than I had imagined on first seeing it.

At the order “ Let go ! ” the moorings were rapidly removed. At the same time streams of water came from the sides of the envelope. It was explained to me that, on coming to earth, long conduits inside the framework were filled with water, in order exactly to ballast the balloon, which, however, owing to the fragility of its cars, could not be allowed to touch the ground.

The dirigible rose to an altitude of about 200 metres. It answered well to the rudders, both as regards direction and height. Movement was very smooth. On the other hand, the noise of the motors and the four propellers was deafening.

Zeppelin and Professor Hergesell, of Strassburg, went with us and gave full explanations. Among the things they told us, I remember a curious story, related by the inventor.

“ A few days ago, in just such marvellous weather as

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this," he said, "I was peacefully travelling along when, suddenly, on arriving above the little hills that encircle the Rhine at the exit to the lake, the dirigible, as though seized by the invisible hand of a giant, made a bound of 600 metres into the air. I was terrified. Who would ever have thought that those slight undulations of the ground, forming a chimney, would have provoked such a powerful eddy-wind?"

Certainly this invention, by means of which the Germans expected to conquer the empire of the air, lacked stability. I am aware that the most recent Zeppelins are stronger and better balanced, but they are, nevertheless, very vulnerable and at the mercy of so many atmospheric accidents that we should do well not to exaggerate their military value.

The spectacle we enjoyed from the dirigible was marvellous.

In the evening, our steamer took us back to Constance, where a big banquet was given by Count Zeppelin. I shall say nothing about the enthusiastic toasts which were drunk. "The future of Germany was not only on the water, but also in the air. England would have to behave herself, since, henceforth, a fleet of dirigibles would in a few hours be able to transport an army to London." This and many another wonderful plan was to be divined in the speeches delivered by both the Count and his admirers. One could only laugh at these ridiculous exaggerations.

On the other hand, I was deeply impressed by the following incident. At the end of the dinner, the 300 persons present—members of the Federal Council, high officials and Deputies—rose and sang in chorus "Deutschland über Alles." The almost religious gravity of their

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faces, the fire kindled in their eyes, and the warlike ardour in their voices were a revelation to me. These were no longer children chanting the Pan-German hymn, but all the directors of Imperial policy, and on hearing them thus affirm their monstrous ambitions, in the form of a war song, I realised that the time was not far distant when the great international drama would be enacted before the gaze of the terrified world.

I was, moreover, to experience the same tragic impression when, in 1913, the centenary of the Battle of Leipzig provoked throughout the Empire demonstrations which were quite as grotesque, but also quite as threatening.

A mind formed in the Latin school has a difficulty in comprehending the German mentality. Union among Germanic nations has not been brought about, as in the case of the French and the Italians, by free consent of the people, but by force. Barely two and a half centuries ago Prussia was only a wretched little principality. It is by right of conquest that it has established its hegemony in Germany. To-day it still recognises no other methods of domination than those of brute force. Southern Germany does not love the Prussian : it fears him. Nevertheless, it has no idea of kicking against the pricks. Foreign races within the Empire—Poles, Danes, and the people of Alsace-Lorraine—have always resisted Prussian enterprise. The German nationalities have resigned themselves to accepting it. The passivity of the German naturally inclines him to these abdications when face to face with a more powerful ethnical group. His resignation does not go as far as an enthusiastic rally ; it is rather a case of submitting to the inevitable. The Prussian is a disagreeable master ; but he is the master all the same. Therefore, what is the good of setting up a resistance which



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can bring no immediate result ? The man of the North knows the temperament of the Southerner. Therefore he puts on the screw and finds it pays very well. Hence the unbelievable impertinence of Prussian statesmen, who, every time there is a slight opposition in Parliament, immediately crack the whip, knowing full well beforehand that they will at once obtain the most passive obedience.

## CHAPTER XII

### SOME PRUSSIAN TYPES.

Haeringen, Falkenhayn, and Deimling—1905—Their Urbanity—  
Their Mentality — The Galleries — Religious Legislation —  
Homogeneous Parties.

DURING the present war, when reading the official *communiqués*, I have come across the names of a number of general officers whose acquaintance I made in the Reichstag. General von Haeringen, the brutal destroyer of Rheims Cathedral, replaced von Einem at the Ministry of War. He is a big man with a vulgar face and a slouching walk, and was always tightly laced in a uniform too small for him. He spoke very badly, but in a hard, commanding tone. On the Budget Committee, as well as during plenary sittings, this gold-laced brute displayed the most insulting disdain for the representatives of the people. The phrases which he painfully drawled out were chiefly distinguished for the cold impertinence he intentionally put into them.

His departure was welcomed by all parties as a deliverance. It is true that Falkenhayn, who succeeded him, was to make him regretted. This General, indeed, did not make the slightest attempt to hide his horror of Parliament and its principles. He sought for conflicts, and, having succeeded in provoking them, it was with a "surly delectation," as theologians say, that he dragged them out. The Reichstag, in his eyes, was the enemy, on which he made a frontal attack, with all his big guns in action.

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Falkenhayn's physique fits his employment. He is big and lean ; his face, with a nose like an eagle's beak, is long and angular ; his gestures are sharp and peremptory ; and his shrill, jerky voice is that of a non-commissioned officer. The Zabern affair was his triumph. In the presence of the early condemnatory attitude of Parliament, the Chancellor capitulated. Bethmann-Hollweg hastened, in fact, to the Emperor and obtained from the Sovereign a severe reprimand against the officers of the 99th Infantry Regiment. But Falkenhayn would not accept this retreat. He demanded, imperiously, that the Statthalter and his collaborators be removed. At his orders, the Council of War acquitted Colonel von Reuter and Lieutenants Schatt and von Förster. When, finally, the incident once more came before the Imperial Parliament, it was the Minister of War who replied to the questioners. He did so with that cold impertinence and haughty disdain which characterise the Prussian officer. His eulogy of the German lieutenant, of that young sensualist who deliberately tramples on all laws, but in whom Prussia places all her hopes, provoked unanimous protests. And yet the domesticated Reichstag went back on its first vote, and Falkenhayn, because he had cracked his whip in the ears of all those knaves who crouched and cringed before militarism, registered a fresh triumph over the astounded parliamentarians. We left the Reichstag that day with shame on our brow and rage in our hearts. The German nation was certainly ripe for every form of servitude.

Von Deimling had had less success a few years before. In those days, this skinny little man was only a colonel of a colonial regiment. *A propos* of a question of effectives, he had charged and captured the tribune, as though it were an enemy fort ; and then had begun to thunder forth



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a paraphrase, in terms of military command, of the motto, "The King orders and your duty is to obey." At first his speech was interrupted by furious exclamations, but in the end everybody roared at the naïve self-conceit of the unfortunate officer. Never was an official orator more cruelly heckled in the Imperial Parliament.

After this, can one be surprised that this crazy fellow, whose meninges had evidently been dried up by a colonial sun, committed the worst eccentricities when, later, the Emperor entrusted him with the command of the troops occupying Alsace-Lorraine? General von Deimling's quarrels with the Government and the Strassburg Press were epic. Once more people decided to laugh at the stupid affectation of this hare-brained creature, who, however, at the time of the Zabern affair, provoked the gravest disputes.

In 1905 I was directly concerned in the negotiations which took place *à propos* of the Algeciras Conference.

It will be difficult for me to say everything about the incidents of the months of May and June of that critical year. Therefore I shall speak with the discretion which circumstances still impose on me. The French Chamber had been greatly alarmed by the first German ultimatum relative to the convocation of the Algeciras Conference, demanded by Germany. A French statesman, who had urgently summoned me to Paris, asked me to obtain accurate information regarding the Chancellor's intentions. Thus, I came to have a long conversation with Herr von Muhlberg, to whom Herr von Richthofen, then Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, sent me. The following is a summary of the declarations Herr von Muhlberg made to me, whilst authorising me to communicate them to whom they concerned :

"The Madrid Convention of 1880 bears the signature

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of Germany. The Anglo-French Agreement of 1904 protests our signature without our consent. Our national honour is at stake. We are therefore obliged to demand that all the signatories of the Madrid Convention be called together again. We know that we shall be in a minority at this conference, but our honour will be saved. As to M. Delcassé, whether he remains at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or not is a question with which we have nothing whatever to do. *However, I wish to inform you that we shall converse with him no longer.*"

I went to Paris to transmit these declarations. It was at the time the King of Spain was expected there. M. Delcassé's resignation was not officially known until after the departure of Alphonse XIII. Germany, however, was informed about it immediately.

Four weeks later, having returned to Colmar, I received two telegrams, summoning me to Paris. Suspecting that Moroccan affairs were again at stake, I wrote to Herr von Richthofen that if he had a communication to make to me he might send it to me at the Hôtel Victoria. This is what had happened. In the absence of Prince von Radolin, when the Franco-German negotiations seemed to be following their normal course, Herr von Flottow, the German Chargé d'Affaires, had presented a fresh comminatory Note, which had greatly disturbed the Government of the Republic. M. Rouvier was quite determined not to give way, although he hoped to be informed in a precise manner regarding the intentions of German diplomacy.

I knew nothing, but I informed the delegate of the Ministry of the precaution I had taken before leaving Colmar. He thanked me and asked me to communicate to him, without delay, anything that came to my know-

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ledge. In fact, two days before Whitsuntide, I received from Berlin the following unsigned telegram, in German :

“Ambassador returns to Paris to-morrow Saturday morning. Will receive you eleven o'clock.”

Before going to the appointment, I saw again the person who transmitted the instructions of the Minister to me. I was entrusted with the following message to Prince von Radolin :

“France has gone to the extreme limit of the concessions she can make. During the past four weeks the Minister of War has taken every step to guard against a sudden attack, and the Government, moreover, has secured the support of England. Therefore, it can accept no further comminatory Note.”

This was clear, firm, categorical. On reaching the Rue de Lille, I was immediately shown into Prince von Radolin's private study. The Ambassador told me that he had seen William II the day before, that the Emperor was very nervous, and that the instructions he had received from him left no room for fresh negotiations.

“Very well, your Excellency,” I replied. “Then there is nothing for you to do but to pack your trunks. M. Rouvier will hand you your passports this afternoon.”

Prince von Radolin gave a start.

“But I don't want to leave Paris,” he cried. “I like Paris very much indeed and I've some excellent friends here.”

A very animated discussion then followed between the German diplomatist and myself. The result was that we set to work to draw up a long telegram, in which the Ambassador summed up the declarations I had transmitted to him. When we reached the passage in which English assistance was to be mentioned, I proposed the following wording :



## SOME PRUSSIAN TYPES

“England is ready to send 100,000 men to the Continent immediately.”

“Suppose we put 300,000?” exclaimed Prince von Radolin.

Much surprised at this whim of the diplomatist, I pointed out to him the necessity, in order to obtain an immediate result, of remaining within the bounds of probability. He admitted it with a certain amount of sadness.

I have always retained an amused recollection of this incident. Prince von Radolin at that time had clearly but one concern—to intimidate his Government, in order not to be obliged to leave his dear Paris.

The despatch was immediately sent to Berlin. I left the Embassy at noon. At five o'clock the Prince called on M. Rouvier, and it looked as though he had received fresh instructions, for the interview had a character, if not of great cordiality, at least of perfect politeness. Meanwhile, I had given an account of my interview with the Ambassador to the delegate of the President of the Council.

I must confess that rarely have I experienced such great anxiety as I did during that day. Prince von Radolin had invited me to lunch the next day, Whitsuntide, at the Embassy, but I declined, as I was anxious to get back to Colmar.

At the opening of the war of 1914, the former German Ambassador in Paris was the object of suspicion on the part of the Imperial Government, and the news agencies even reported that he had been interned. I should therefore have abstained from recording my conversation of 1905 with the German diplomatist but for the fact that he died recently.

The politeness of Herr von Richthofen was almost

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affected. However, it sometimes happened that in his case also the coarse Prussian reappeared in the courteous diplomatist.

A few weeks before the incident I have just related, I went one morning to the Foreign Office to attend to an urgent piece of business. Sending in my card to Herr von Richthofen, I was immediately shown into his office, although a slender old gentleman had preceded me into the *salon* and, seated in an arm-chair, seemed to be discreetly and patiently waiting until he was called.

"Your Excellency," I said to the Secretary of State, "there is an old gentleman in the ante-room that you might receive before me. I am not in a hurry."

"Not at all," replied Herr von Richthofen, laughing. "He's only the representative of the French Republic."

It was, indeed, the aged Marquis de Noailles, French Ambassador to Berlin.

I could hardly contain myself, so atrocious did this gratuitous insult to France appear to me. The Prussian Minister certainly expressed it before an Alsatian Deputy intentionally, in order to show in what small esteem he held the country to which my colleagues and I were attached by all our heart-strings.

With supreme "cheek," my colleagues of the Reichstag applied to all foreign nations nicknames that crystallised their hatred and disdain. The English were "the shop-keepers of London," the Montenegrins "ram-thieves," and the Serbians "rat-trap dealers." Even the Allies of the Empire did not escape this mania for giving insulting names to everyone who had not the honour of belonging to the lordly race. The Austrians were commonly called "heroes in slippers" (*Pantofelhelden*) and the Italians "the riff-raff of the Triple Alliance" (*Dreibundshalunken*).

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Never did Erzberger employ any other terms to designate those whom he tried to win over, at the beginning of the war, to the cause of his country. Ah ! if only the Italians had known how they were detested and despised in Berlin. As to the Spaniards, the Pan-German Press incessantly stated that these poor "orange-eaters" had reached the last stage of idiocy. If I had the time, I should form a collection of these coarse insults and dedicate them to Señor Maura.

The ultra-patriots of Greater Germany had thus created a curious state of mind not only among the people but also in the German Parliament. The further they went, the more the representatives of "the supreme race" puffed themselves out with pride. Everything which was not Germanic merited but disdain. The Empire voluntarily isolated itself in the midst of barbarian or degenerate races. And thus the ruling idea of Pan-Germanism—the Germans alone possess a genius for invention and organisation, therefore they have an absolute right to impose their domination on nations incapable of exploiting their riches rationally—ended by imposing itself on apparently the clearest minds. A thousand times have I heard these divagations issue from the mouths of members of Parliament who spoke quite reasonably on other subjects. It was an interesting phenomenon to observe. Undoubtedly it was a case of collective insanity.

The principal reason why William II became unpopular in Germany was his well-known hesitancy and pusillanimity, whereas the whole population was in favour of a more aggressive international policy. In 1913 and in the spring of 1914 the Berlin crowds were sulky with the Emperor, whilst the Crown Prince was the object of noisy ovations every time he appeared in public. During the months



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immediately preceding the outbreak of war, the Prince Imperial was on temporary duty at the Prussian Home Office. Now, at nine o'clock every morning, the students assembled in front of the Linden Palace to cheer the heir to the throne, in the most noisy manner. The fair-haired, degenerate youth seemed to take the greatest pleasure in these demonstrations, which were directed against his father. We must not be too surprised at this. Such cases of opposition are common in the Hohenzollern family. Who has forgotten the indecent impatience shown by the man who was to become William II, during the Emperor Frederick's death agony, which lasted longer than his successor liked ?

I was present at that scene in the Reichstag, about which so much has been said, when the Crown Prince applauded the bellicose declarations of the Conservative member Heydebrandt. The Prince, seated in the front row of the Imperial box, was laughing heartily, and every time the speaker thundered forth one of his tirades against the Chancellor, he thumped the balustrade with his gloved hand. His provocative attitude created a scandal in the Reichstag, but the next day the whole of the Pan-German Press covered the heir to the throne with praise.

On the occasion of great sittings, and particularly when foreign politics were being discussed, the Imperial box was occupied by the young princes and the Court dignitaries. The neighbouring gallery, reserved for the Diplomatic Corps, presented the same animation. As to the public galleries, they were always crowded. Admission was by cards, which were handed every day to the heads of the groups, taking into account the numerical importance of the parliamentary fractions. We had only a dozen cards at our disposal. The number of applicants was

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always triple. When a stormy debate was expected the Reichstag was literally besieged. Only those furnished with a written recommendation from a Deputy were allowed by the ushers to enter the big 96-yard long lobby. From half-past twelve, about 200 of these privileged ones, penned up at both ends of the corridor, patiently waited until the desired cards were handed to them. When we passed before them, these wretched people, who often waited there until six in the evening, used to appeal to us in the most lamentable tone. The ushers, moreover, did a business in invitation cards and derived considerable profit thereby.

I always admired the marvellous endurance of the occupants of the public galleries. Even when the debates were terribly monotonous and all the members shunned the House, those honest folk who had succeeded, after a thousand difficulties, in getting flap-seats stuck there until the very end. Not merely attention but veritable devotion was to be seen in the looks of these privileged spectators. Did they not possess the incomparable pleasure of being able for several hours to gaze on the important men who held the destiny of the German people in their hands—that destiny crowned with glory and one that promised incomparable wealth? Ah! there again, how one could detect on those benches, crowded with silent worshippers, the shamefully servile and at the same time sordidly cupid soul of the nation of prey!

A few concluding words as regards religious legislation. This ought not to be within the province of the Reichstag. Paragraph 6 of the Constitution of the Empire, which enumerates the questions on which the Federal Council and the common Parliament may legislate, does not mention it. Indeed, we find the most

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dissimilar religious laws in the various States. Bavaria lives under a special Concordat with the Holy See, somewhat similar to the former French Concordat. In Prussia, there exists a common law that the Church has tacitly accepted. Württemberg and the Grand Duchy of Baden have a unilateral statute which still recognises advowson in the case of certain families, a right abolished everywhere else. Saxony has, as it were, excluded Catholics from the common law. In the two Mecklenburgs, a Catholic *curé* may administer the sacraments only under the control and with the, at least, tacit approbation of the Protestant pastor of his district. We find, then, all *régimes* in Germany, from the broadest legal protection to the most odious persecution. Every time the Centre attempted in the Reichstag to protest against attacks on religious liberty in one or other of the Confederate States, the other parliamentary groups protested, however, with the greatest energy against this attempt to interfere with the independence of the States.

It was also on the plea of this independence that the Conservatives of Prussia and Mecklenburg caused obstruction every time the parties of the Left tried to criticise the electoral laws of these particular States.

And yet, in religious matters, Prince von Bismarck had succeeded in 1873, contrary both to the spirit and the letter of the 1871 Constitution, in passing the famous persecuting laws which called forth the "Kulturkampf," that formidable struggle which Protestant Prussia waged, without regard for anyone, against the Catholics of the Empire until 1888, the date on which, the Iron Chancellor having retired to Canossa, most of the Laws of May were abolished. Of this arsenal of repressive measures there remained, in the course of recent years, only two clauses



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of the Law against the Jesuits and the assimilated Congregations (the Redemptorists and the Ladies of the Sacred Heart). That was enough for the Catholic Centre to protest every year against the way in which these religious bodies were ostracised, and for the Chancellor to make use of these last remains of the "Kulturkampf" as a powerful means of blackmailing the most powerful party in the Imperial Parliament.

Nothing was more comical and at the same time sadder than the successive attitudes of the leaders of the Centre when the debates on the Jesuits recurred periodically. At first, the Spahns and the Erzbergers seemed to want to destroy everything with fire and sword. Then, succumbing once more to their mania for coming to compromises, they proposed ways of getting out of the difficulty. Finally, they got themselves paid for their complete resignation by a few personal advantages.

At last, the day came when they obtained the abolition of Paragraph II of the Law, the one forbidding Jesuits, even individually, from entering the territory of the Confederation. The Press of the Centre exulted. Alas! a few days later the Federal Council decreed that the priests, on return from exile, could not be permitted to speak in the churches, and that in lecture-halls they would only be allowed to discourse on non-religious subjects. The Centre was filled with indignation at these ridiculous restrictions, but it remained governmental.

The Centre was quite as lacking in heroism when, on several occasions, it brought forward its proposals regarding tolerance. As I have pointed out above, Catholics are literally outlawed in certain German States. Now, the Reichstag always refused to put an end to this persecution, and the Chancellor was the first to refuse to grant Parlia-

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ment the right of legislating in this matter. Had the Centre possessed more energy, it might have obtained important concessions. It was known, however, in Government spheres, that its attitude had merely the value of a platonic demonstration, and no further notice was taken of it.

At the Congress of German Catholics, we witnessed every year quite as surprising a spectacle. The question of the independence of the Holy See was discussed there regularly. In the last century, the speakers chosen to interpret the feelings of the assembly as regards this matter demanded the re-establishment of the temporal power. From the day on which Erzberger played a preponderant part in the Centre, inaccurate and fallacious formulas were adopted, which the speakers diluted in their hollow and embarrassed phraseology.

It was also the leaders of the Centre who opposed the publication in Germany of the Encyclical of Pius X on St. Canisius. Spahn played at being a little Father of the Church. He domineered over the German episcopacy. When Count Oppensdorff entered on the struggle against Modernism, the great parliamentary leader excommunicated him. The poor Count, who could not understand his expulsion from the Centre, accepted the struggle, in which, however, like good Roehren, he was to succumb.

This nobleman, who, after foolishly squandering in his youth a large part of his patrimony, had found wisdom through marriage and become a convinced and practising believer, was a curious figure. A little "cracked," but possessed of an activity as devouring as it was scattered, he spent the whole of his time drawing up reports and attending to his voluminous correspondence. His wife, a Polish lady of great intelligence and beauty, vigorously seconded him in his work. She was often seen in the

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lobbies of the Reichstag, where she astonished the members by her extensive political knowledge and the charm of her eloquence. Countess Oppendorff, although she was the mother of fourteen children, had the freshness of a young girl. I must also add that her husband was the brother-in-law of Prince von Radolin, the former German Ambassador in Paris.

Another feudal lord, young Prince von Aremberg, was my neighbour for three years. There were two von Arembergs in the Reichstag. One, a member of the committee of the Centre and a personal friend of Prince von Bülow, worked chiefly behind the scenes of Parliament. The other did not work at all. Like the Hohenlohes, who were half Austrian, he possessed a double nationality—Belgian and German. This big fellow, who was a multimillionaire, was especially proud of his intimate relations with William II. Since the outset of the war he has shamefully betrayed the King of the Belgians, who also honoured him with his confidence. I was not at all surprised at this.

There were few aristocrats in the fraction of the Centre ; but they played a considerable part in it. The insupportable Savigny would hardly speak to the little men of his party. Young Prince von Loewenstein was less distant. Nevertheless, he energetically opposed the advance of working-men secretaries.

Of all the parliamentary groups, the Centre was the one in which oppositions between programme and tendencies were most pronounced. The perfectly homogeneous Conservative fraction knew nothing of these interior troubles ; no more did the Democratic Party, for it had evolved as a whole towards Imperialism. The differences of the National-Liberals arose chiefly over personal questions.



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On the Extreme Left, the Possibilists had succeeded, progressively, in checkmating the doctrinaires. On the other hand, the Centre, composed of Deputies belonging to all social circles, closely grouped by one interest alone, the defence of religious liberties, succeeded only with difficulty, over questions of political, economic, and social doctrines, in finding definitive formulas. The dictatorship of the great leaders had, however, of recent years, imposed silence on an Opposition which more than once nearly brought about a split. Once more, patriotism, exalted by the systematic agitation of the Pan-Germans, produced miracles.

In principle, our relations with the Centre were cordial, but they grew cool when the Catholic party became Imperialist. In 1899 we were still invited to the dinners of the fraction. After 1905, we considered it more in accordance with our dignity not to take part in them.

*À propos* of invitations, let me relate, parenthetically, a little anecdote. A German colleague, meeting me at the exit to the Reichstag, often said to me :

“ Will you give me the pleasure of dining with me ? ”

On one occasion I accepted. But when the time came for paying for the dinner, my host, who had urged me to choose the dearest dishes, paid his own bill but not mine. It was thus that I learnt the meaning attached to the word “ invitation ” in Germany. The surprise of our guests was always very great when we settled their bills with our own. “ Come ! this sort of thing does not take place among friends,” they seemed to say.

Germans are also ferociously fond of their comforts. I remember one winter day, when a party of Deputies was going to the Zoological Gardens to attend a banquet. It was terribly cold and a cutting sleet was falling from

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a grey, low sky. All the inside seats of the tramcar had been taken by storm. Now, at the back of the car there was standing a poor old woman, insufficiently clothed and coughing lamentably. Filled with pity, I gave up my seat to her and went outside. There was nothing heroic in the act, for I was wearing a thick overcoat. Now, during the whole of that evening, I was the butt for the jokes of my colleagues. "Wetterlé is a thorough Frenchman. Did you notice his gallantry?"

Ah! what brutes they are!

Here I suspend the first part of my recollections. In the second, in which I propose to be more precise and to follow a more rigorous chronological order, I shall treat of the Parliament of Alsace-Lorraine.

From what precedes, the reader will, I hope, retain the impression that official Germany desired war and prepared for it for a long time past. Since 1905, my Alsace-Lorraine colleagues and myself were convinced that the great crisis would soon arise. Under the powerful impulse of Prince von Bülow, all parties had relegated their particular demands to the background, in order to take part in the great national concentration. The three Military Bills of 1911, 1912, and 1913 clearly announced that the fatal day was approaching. The whole energy of the German nation was directed towards the act of brigandage which, it was thought, was to bestow universal domination on the race of prey. In the tribune and lobbies of the Reichstag they talked solely of "world-politics." The impatience of the business world, which counted on using the marvellous instrument of war prepared by Parliament to remove foreign competition once and for all, was restrained with difficulty. Prussia, and the whole of

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Germany, especially after the last events in the Balkans, were ready, armed to the teeth, to strike.

Our warnings were repeated over and over again. In September, 1913, I said to a member of the French Higher Council of War, "General, it will come to pass next May or June." I was only five weeks out of my reckoning.

How discomfited must my former colleagues be at the present time, and all those who informed me, with a sneer, that the sudden invasion of France would be but a military promenade! That military promenade has lasted for the past three years and is not near its end. Twelve great nations have confronted the wreckers of Berlin, and "France the Hostage" has covered herself with glory by arresting the advance of the enemy of the human race.

To-morrow, the Empires of prey will beg for peace. Will the old democratic spirit of the Richters and Liebknechts, which the Pan-Germans crushed under the heavy slab of their savage doctrines, then rise from its tomb to summon the misguided people to revolt? Will the Hohenzollerns and the Hapsburgs see their disabused subjects rise against them, to call them to account for spilling so much blood uselessly?

An old German prophecy (dating, it is said, from the fifteenth century) announces that the day will come when the Emperor—alone, wounded, abandoned by everybody, and driven into the Forest of Teutoburg—will cry out, "Where are my people? Where is my army?"

This prophecy, known to all Germany, will come to pass, and on that day the world, delivered at last from the Prussian nightmare, will joyfully celebrate the Festival of Peace, definitely reconquered.

THE END.



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